

Sunday, July 14, 2024

## A Prayer To Know God

This is the third in a series of sermons through the book of Ephesians, and today, we will finish up the first chapter. As you may recall, we went through Ephesians 1:3-14 last time, and it is all one long sentence in the original language (made up of 200+ words). Today's passage is another long sentence in the original language, but slightly shorter at around 170 words. In verses 3-14, Paul praises God in lofty language for His sovereign work in redemption, from eternity past to eternity future. He stresses that all spiritual blessings that God gives us are in Christ (that is, there are no spiritual blessings for anyone outside of Christ). In these blessings He includes election, adoption, making us accepted in the Beloved, redemption, making known to us the mystery of His will, inheritance, and being sealed with the Holy Ghost. In today's passage, Paul tells the Ephesians that he's been thanking God for them and praying on their behalf that they might be given the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in knowing God, and that they might know three things: "(1) what is the hope of his calling, and (2) what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And (3) what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe." (verses 18-19). Very high level, we might summarize the opening of the letter with "God has sovereignly elected you faithful saints, He's adopted you, accepted you, redeemed you, revealed His will to you, given you an inheritance, and sealed you with the Holy Spirit, and I've been thanking God for you and praying that you would come to a deeper knowledge of Him and of what He's done for you." I confess that as I was going through this passage, I thought several times, "am I reading this right? This is almost too good to be true." So, I pray that this will sink down into your ears and perhaps you'll know our God a little bit better and love Him even more.

**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; 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: 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, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 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: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Ephesians 1:15-23)**

## Thanksgiving

**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...(Ephesians 1:15-16a)**

Paul starts off with a “wherefore” which points to everything that he had just said in the previous section. Because God has chosen them, adopted them, redeemed them, etc., Paul thanks Him unceasingly for them. The idea is that he didn’t just thank God once – it’s a repeated, ongoing action. Every time he prays, he’s thanking God for these beloved saints. This is something we ought to do as well. But he adds another reason here for thanking God – “after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.” He had heard some news about these Ephesians. Remember, at the time he’s writing this epistle, it’s been around 5 years or so since he last interacted with them in person. A lot can change in 5 years. But the news has traveled back to him of their faith and their love, and he’s thankful to learn that they have maintained their walk in Christ. One important note here is that he’s thanking God for their faith and their love. Why would that be? It’s because God is the one who graciously gave them the faith and the love. He’s not saying, “I thank you Ephesians for exercising your free will and choosing to have faith in Christ and to love one another.” He’s thanking God.

This part of the passage is of vital importance, because it describes the people for whom he’s praying. They have faith in the Lord Jesus, and they have love unto all the saints. Those two things always go hand in hand. I’d like to spend some time on this, because if these two things don’t describe you, then none of this chapter applies to you. I say, it’s of vital importance. He’s boiled everything down into two characteristics, which act as a litmus test for an authentic Christian – if you can’t get past these two things, nothing else about you matters. He didn’t say “after I heard that you guys are really good at expounding the 5 points of Calvinism” or “after I heard that you guys have made a name for yourself in preaching against sin” or “after I heard *anything else*.” As good as those other things may be, that’s not what he said. He said, “after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints.”

The first characteristic is “faith in the Lord Jesus.” This means that the Lord Jesus is the object of our faith – the one in whom we have faith. And it means that the atmosphere in which we exist is “in the Lord Jesus,” and that is by our faith. It goes without saying, but this has to be the Lord Jesus as He is portrayed in the scripture – you can’t make up your own Jesus with a set of attributes that you find to be palatable, and then claim to have faith in the Lord Jesus. Phony Christians with their own versions of “the Lord Jesus” abound. For instance, if your Jesus didn’t preach more about hell than anyone else in the Bible and would never say anything like “Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?” (Matthew 23:33) then whoever it is that you supposedly have faith in is not the Lord Jesus.

The name “Jesus” means “Jehovah is salvation.” And “Lord” means “he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; supreme in authority; the owner; the sovereign.” He is the One in whom we must have faith – He is the Savior and the Lord. The “Lord” part is important; it’s not just a word that we mindlessly tack on when we talk about Him. You can’t have faith in Him as your Savior without also having faith in Him as your sovereign Lord. That is, He must be the Lord of your life – He owns you, you live according to His standards, etc. A faith in Him as your Lord produces obedience to Him and good works. Look around, and you’ll see a generation of so-called “Christians” who love to talk about Jesus as their Savior, but who don’t want to live under Him as their Lord – they’ll make their own rules and standards as it suits them, thank you, and Jesus can kindly mind His own business and stop being so judgmental. They do not have faith in the Lord Jesus. In a similar vein, faith is not having good morals. It’s not being involved in church activities. It’s not being able to quote verses, or tell Bible stories, or explain doctrine. To have faith in Him is to trust in Him completely, utterly, absolutely. It is to believe that He came to save you, personally. It’s not enough to believe that He came to make salvation possible, or that He came to save generic sinners – you must believe that He came to actually save YOU. It is to place all your hope in Him, and what He did as your substitute. It is to trust Him as the one who atoned for your sins. It is to live your life submitting to Him as your Lord, under His precepts, His commandments, His standards. It is to cast away all trust and confidence in yourself or anyone or anything else. It is to reject all self-righteousness and meritorious works, and rest on Him alone. It is to have Him as the center of all your thoughts, actions, and outlook. Does that describe the type of faith that you have? If it doesn’t, don’t rest until it does. This isn’t the time to hem and haw, straddle the fence, procrastinate or rest your eternal soul on some vague, uncertain “hope.”

The second characteristic is “love unto all the saints.” This is the natural result of saving faith. If you have true faith in the Lord Jesus, you will love all the saints. “All the saints” means that you don’t get to pick and choose which of the saints you’re going to love. To be perfectly candid, some people are easier to love than others, but we don’t have the option to just do what is the easiest. To love all the saints means that you love them BECAUSE they are saints, regardless of their station in life, personality differences you may have with them, the strength (or weakness) of their faith and understanding, whether or not they get on your nerves, etc. Consider them as your brothers and sisters in Christ. Consider them as ones in whom Christ lives. They are saved by the same Christ that you are saved by. They are united to the same Christ that you are united to. They are part of the same body of Christ that you are part of, and they are just as essential as you are to the body. Christ is preparing a place for them just like He’s preparing one for you. And they will dwell in glory with the same Christ that you will dwell with, for eternity. When you despise one of the saints, you despise Christ. And we can’t very well love our neighbors and our enemies if we don’t start with loving one another. This

takes a great deal of self-awareness and self-examination, so please don't let this go in one ear and out the other. There's a reason that the Holy Spirit keeps on bringing this topic of loving one another up. I'm not going to dwell on it because we've said so many words about this, but there are certain habits of behavior that are antithetical to loving the saints – being strict with others but being lenient with yourself, selfishness, envy, censoriousness [when Jesus said “judge not” that wasn't an absolute statement that you can't ever judge between right and wrong; it was the opposite. We're SUPPOSED to judge...but we're supposed to judge ourselves FIRST.], backbiting, impatience, pride, contempt, attributing the worst possible motives, believing the worst things about people, not forgiving one another, taking advantage of kindness, entitlement, etc. A detailed review of Jon's series of sermons on 1 Corinthians 13 would be in order for everyone in the church. You'll recall that Jesus said, “By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.” (John 13:35). Is this how men know that you, individually, are one of His disciples? Is this how men know that we, collectively, are His disciples? If not, it's time for a sea change; it's time to seek the Lord for help. That's true for you, and it's true for me.

Now that we have identified the people for whom Paul is giving thanks, and why he's giving thanks for them, we can move on to the specific petitions that he makes on their behalf.

### **The Spirit Of Wisdom And Revelation**

**...making mention of you in my prayers; 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: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened... (Ephesians 1:16b-18a)**

This prayer of Paul is very specific. He makes mention of them, personally, and the petitions that he makes are very precise and detailed. This is a good pattern for us to follow when we pray for one another. The prayer is addressed to “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.” I mentioned last time that when we see “the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,” we should understand that we're talking about a covenant. Because God is the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, He is our God. We have the privilege of being part of the covenant of redemption through Christ. And the God of our Lord Jesus Christ is also known as “the Father of glory” which may also be translated as “the glorious Father.” His glory is the sum total of all His perfections, and He puts that glory on display through everything He does. In this context, He is particularly glorified in redeeming us and in giving us the Holy Spirit.

The heart of this prayer is that God “may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.” I think the “spirit” there should have a capital S. We're talking about the Holy Spirit, called the Spirit of wisdom and revelation here, because He is the One who

gives us wisdom (knowledge, understanding) and He is the One who reveals things to us. You've all experienced the joy of reading some part of scripture that you've read many times and seeing something that you've never seen before. That is the Spirit at work in you. The same Spirit who initially enlightened the eyes of your understanding continues to work in you. (See 1 Corinthians 2). Nobody in this place should be satisfied with your current level of understanding – there's always more wisdom to be gained and more things to be revealed to you. Those things come only by the Holy Spirit, and the way there is through prayer. To be sure, you must have some minimal enlightenment to have true faith in the Lord Jesus in the first place (Paul later describes those who don't have faith as "having the understanding darkened" – Ephesians 4:18), but there's always more to be obtained. So please be careful about judging another person by your current level of understanding – the reality is that we're all like the little child playing in the tide pool thinking that he's really arrived on the scene, when the ocean is sitting a few feet away.

So, the prayer is for us to have more wisdom, more revelation, more understanding, specifically "in the knowledge of Him." He wants us to know God more. Not just to know facts about God – but to know God. For example, it's not just to know the doctrine of election, but to know the One who elected you. To know Him is to love Him, to have fellowship with Him, to commune with Him. The term that Paul uses for "knowledge" here is the strongest term in the Greek language that he could have used. It is a certain, exact, experiential, intimate knowledge. To know Him, Jesus tells us, is the very essence of eternal life – "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." (John 17:3). To know Him is to understand that He is not just some remote concept, but that He, personally, is present with you – that He has made His abode with you (John 14:23). So, he wants us to know the God who has redeemed us, and specifically, he wants us to know Him with respect to His calling, His inheritance, and His power. You'll see that these three petitions are related to one another and they crescendo into a climax.

### **The Hope Of His Calling**

**...that ye may know what is the hope of his calling... (Ephesians 1:18b)**

To "know" here means to perceive, to see, to experience, to understand. The thing to be known is "what is the hope of his calling." When you see the word "hope" in the Bible, it's not talking about an uncertain wish of some future thing that may or may not happen; it's talking about a certain expectation of a thing that will most assuredly happen. It really is just trust in God's promises. Now the word "calling" is used in two major ways in scripture. The first is what we can refer to as the "general call." This is where we go out and call anyone that we can get our hands on to repentance. It's not rocket science. "You're a vile, hell-bound,

condemned sinner who has the wrath of God abiding on you. The Lord Jesus came into the world to save sinners, even the chief of sinners. Therefore, repent and believe on the Lord Jesus.” Most people don’t respond positively to this call. Jesus said, “Many are called, but few are chosen.” (Matthew 22:14). The second is what we might refer to as the “effectual call.” This is where the Holy Ghost pierces into your dark, stony heart, gives you a heart of flesh and new life, and makes you see that yes, you really are a vile, hell-bound, condemned sinner who has the wrath of God abiding on you, and that your only hope is to repent and believe on the Lord Jesus. This is a work that only God can do. Only the elect of God receive this call. Everyone who receives this call responds positively to it. That’s the call that this verse is talking about when it says “his calling.” It’s the same call that we see in Romans 8:30 – “whom He did predestinate, them He also called.”

So, the prayer is that we might know the hope that comes as a result of Him calling us. This, by the way, is the God who we need to know – the one who called us and has given us a hope. The hope is there – we just need to see it. If knowing this hope was automatic, or if our perception of it was always present, there would be no reason to pray for it. But we need to pray for it – for ourselves and for one another. We go through stages where our assurance waxes and wanes. Sometimes we are absolutely positive that we’ve been called by God, and other times we wonder if we’ve ever been called at all and aren’t just living a charade. The devil loves to introduce doubts and uncertainties (which is one reason why it’s essential to “give diligence to make your calling and election sure.” – 2 Peter 1:10). Sometimes we get so focused on this world that we forget what the end is; we forget what God has promised us. You need to pray for this. You need to have your eyes opened so that you’ll see that there’s a hope attached to his calling. You need to be given more and more wisdom so you’ll understand what all the implications are of God calling you. There’s a sure and glorious future for His people – the Lord is coming, we will have glorified bodies, we will be finally redeemed, we will be presented as a Bride, etc. And how you think about the future has an immense impact on your comfort, peace, and behavior now. For an unsaved man, there is no hope (Ephesians 2:12). But we have a hope – a firm conviction of our future glory with God.

### **The Riches Of The Glory Of His Inheritance**

**...and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints... (Ephesians 1:18c)**

Paul’s next petition for the Ephesians is to know what is the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints. This fleshes out the “hope” that he introduced in the first petition. When we say “His inheritance,” we can either be talking about God’s inheritance in possessive terms (we are HIS inheritance; we belong to Him), or in terms of Him being the source of it (it is an inheritance FROM HIM for us). Both of those are biblical truths and they are really two

sides of the same coin, so I don't know why it couldn't be referring to both. The term "riches" here refers to wealth, abundance, great value, fulness. The term "glory" here refers to splendor, magnificence, excellence, majesty. So, the prayer is that we would come to some realization of how valuable and splendid this inheritance is.

If we take it in terms of this being God's inheritance, "in the saints" means that His inheritance is found among the saints. Like Deuteronomy 32:9 – "For the LORD'S portion is his people; Jacob is the lot of his inheritance." We are God's inheritance! Consider the vast glory of the creation, and then realize that of all that, God has placed the highest value on His saints. He considers us to be of great importance. He cherishes us as His own children. He looks upon us as the glorious riches fit for a great King. Just look at the price He paid for us! Paul wants us to understand how greatly God prizes us. I briefly touched on this in the previous sermon. It's good to consider your own worthlessness as a sinner, but don't take that so far that you forget that in Christ (and only in Christ), we are of great value in God's eyes. It is absolutely astounding that He would treasure a group of people who were once dead in trespasses and sins, children of wrath, enemies. Words fail. This is what grace is.

If we take it in terms of this being the inheritance that God gives to us, then "in the saints" would mean that the inheritance is shared among the saints. Only the saints will have this inheritance, and we will have it collectively. We will experience the riches and glory of it together. There are little snippets here and there in the scripture, but we know very little about what our inheritance will actually be like. We do know, though, that it is rich and glorious, and it's something to be prized and sought after. Just look at everything in this life – every possession, every experience, every relationship – and understand that the inheritance is so much more valuable, so much more glorious, that it is beyond our imagination. Every little bit that God reveals to us about it is of great comfort and encouragement.

This is the God who Paul wants us to know – the One who considers us to be His rich and glorious inheritance, and the One who will give us a rich and glorious inheritance. And that is something we all need to realize, early and often. Just like the previous petition, if this was something that was automatic, or guaranteed, or we already had full knowledge of it, then we wouldn't need to pray for it.

### **His Great Power Toward Believers**

**...And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 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: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Ephesians 1:19-23)**

The final petition for the Ephesians (and all believers) is that we might know what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us. This is the climax of the prayer, and it is the petition that gets the most elaboration. It relates to the previous petitions (the hope of His calling, and the riches of the glory of His inheritance) because it is by His great power that those things are accomplished. You may be thinking, “well, I don’t really feel that hopeful, and I have my doubts that I’m going to participate in this inheritance.” Well, that might be because you don’t understand what kind of power we’re dealing with here.

The first thing to notice is that Paul is almost exhausting the Greek language in trying to describe this power. It’s as if he can’t come up with enough words. One reason for this is that human language is limited in its ability to explain something like this. Another reason is that when you pile similar words on top of each other, it gives an impression of the superlative nature of the thing you’re talking about. I see at least 6 words here. Trapp also saw 6 words: *"Here is a most emphatic heap of most divine and significant words to express that which can never sufficiently be conceived or uttered. A sixfold gradation the apostle useth to show what a power God puts forth in working the grace of faith."*

- Exceeding (*hyperballō*) – where we get the English word “hyperbole.” It means to surpass, throw beyond, transcend, excel.
- Great (*megethos*) – only time this word is used in the scripture. It means greatness, either in size or quality.
- Power (first usage - *dynamis*) – where we get the English word “dynamite.” It means power, as in potential or ability.
- Working (*energeia*) – where we get the English word “energy.” This is the operation or application of the “exceeding great power.”
- Mighty (*ischys*) – ability, force, strength, might.
- Power (second usage - *kratos*) – where we get the English word “autocrat.” It means force or strength, or the ability to conquer or have dominion.

This is the power that is at work in us. Note that he’s not praying that we might get some measure of power – he’s praying that we might know the power that is already at work in us believers. It is an absolute miracle that anyone is, or ever has been, saved. Do you realize the power that was required to save you? And the power that is required to sustain you and preserve you? And the power that will bring you to glory? God, and only God, saves people. The power of God involved in saving you is at the same level as that of creation. “For God,

who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.” (2 Corinthians 4:6). In the next chapter, he says, “if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” (v. 17). Who but God can call something into creation by speaking a word? It is the same power that God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His right hand. That’s the example that God gives in today’s passage. This is resurrection power at work. Please think about that for a moment. Who among us can raise a creature from the dead and give him life? I can’t. The collective intelligence, ingenuity, technology, science, etc., of human beings can’t. But God can. The same power that was at work in raising Christ from the dead is at work in you. It’s what gave you spiritual life in the first place. It’s how you’re kept from falling away. It’s how you have any ability to serve him out of a right heart.

Perhaps you don’t realize the power of God toward you because you haven’t considered the power of death. Maybe you’ve underestimated the power of your spiritual foes (Satan, the world, your own corruption) and didn’t consider that you needed the power of God. On the other hand, maybe you’ve overestimated the power of your spiritual foes and didn’t consider that God’s power was sufficient to overcome them. Maybe you’ve bought into the culture of rugged individualism and self-reliance. Whatever the reason, most of us, to one degree or another, are still trying to live and operate by our own power. I think a lot of our problems and dysfunctions have to do with people not knowing the power of God to us-ward. But the God who has worked and is working powerfully in us is the God that Paul is praying that we might know. It’s something we ought to pray for. I’ll say again, if all of us defaulted to having this knowledge, then we wouldn’t need to pray for it. On the contrary, the default seems to be that we are all deficient in this knowledge and therefore need to continually pray for it.

When you realize the power that was involved in your calling, you might know the hope that comes along with that calling. When you realize the power that is associated with God’s inheritance, you might know how rich and glorious that inheritance is. And all that works to humble us, cause us to rejoice, have a sense of awe and wonder, forgive one another, love one another, have pity and compassion towards lost souls (that’s where you’d be without the power that is working in you). Unfortunately, most of us want other people to think that we’re humble and selfless, but we really think pretty highly of ourselves, and our words and actions often betray us. We’ll never be sinless in this life, but keeping the power of God in the forefront of our minds would go a long way in giving us humility and self-awareness.

In verses 20-23, he launches into a detailed description of how this power that is “to us-ward” has been wrought in Christ. Specifically, the power is described in terms of His resurrection and His exaltation over all things. We’ll see this in chapter 2, but I’ll mention in passing now that due to our union with Christ, these things are true of us as well – He has “quickened us

together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” (verses 5-6). I think that he goes off on this little “excursion” about Christ for a few reasons:

- Apart from Christ, there is no power working in us.
- His resurrection is an emblem of what has happened to us – we’ve been raised from spiritual death. Paul will carry over this line of talk in chapter 2.
- It is proof that He has overcome every obstacle in our path – Death, Hell, Satan, Sin – all of it has been conquered. This ties directly to “hope” and “inheritance.” There is nothing that can prevent God from fulfilling His plan for us.
- His resurrection is a pledge that we will be resurrected. His seat in heaven is a pledge that we will be there with Him. It is, after all, the prayer of Christ “that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me.” (John 17:24), and it is the promise of Christ that “I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” (John 14:3). Again, this ties directly to “hope” and “inheritance.”

Let’s talk a little more about His exaltation. Jesus Christ is currently sitting at the right hand of God in the heavenly places. He’s interceding for us there. The “heavenly places” is the realm where spiritual activities and powers are at work. And as the God-Man, the Mediator, Christ is there, as a glorified human. The same Jesus Christ who was born in Bethlehem, listened and asked questions in the temple when he was 12 years old, was baptized and tempted in the wilderness at about 30 years of age, was crucified and buried a few years later, is the One who was resurrected and set at the right hand of God in heavenly places where He is right now. My point is, as God, He has always been exalted above all things, but as Mediator, He was set at the right hand of His Father, meaning He’s there in a position of honor, power, glory, authority. This is a reference back to Psalm 110:1 – “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.” We also have a reference to Psalm 8:6 here – “Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet.” (This, incidentally, is another place where Paul makes an implicit comparison between Adam and Christ – Adam was given some dominion over the creation, he failed, and now Christ, the second Adam, has full dominion).

He’s not just at the right hand of God, but He’s “Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion.” There’s been all kinds of speculation on this – is he talking about humans, good angels, bad angels, both types of angels, different ranks of angels? And I don’t know for sure. I believe he’s talking about angels, and I believe there’s some kind of a hierarchy here, but I don’t know what that is. But just in case he left any categories out, he adds, “and every name that is named.” No power is excluded from His dominion. (This

naming of names, incidentally, was a big deal in the Ephesian culture of magic and exorcisms, etc., - people would call on this or that name to invoke some power. This would have had a very specific meaning for the Ephesians, to send the message that no matter what power these charlatans around you try to invoke, God is higher than that.) The point is that if you take the most powerful creatures in God's creation, whatever their rank, He is not just above them, but He is FAR above them (so certainly He would be above any power on earth). And just in case you thought that there were time restrictions on the dominion of Christ, He has dominion "not only in this world, but also in that which is to come." Christ is reigning right now – don't get so caught up in focusing on His return that you forget that even right now, He's reigning. In case anyone is still confused, he goes on to say, "and hath put all things under His feet." It means that the creation is in full subjection to Him. He is the Victor.

Now, that is all glorious and a cause for us to worship and adore Him, but here is the most amazing part – God "gave him to be the head over all things to the church." Why is Christ, our Mediator, exalted to this position of dominion? Why is He head over all things? It is for the sake of the church. God gave Him to the church, in His capacity as head over all things, for the benefit of the church. You might have low thoughts of the church from time to time, but God doesn't. Christ is governing the entire universe for the sake of the church. Can you imagine? He's in that position of power and dominion to ensure that every last sheep will be brought home. This is what is being orchestrated up in the "heavenly places" and playing out around us, every day. Spiritual battles are being waged, and we have the Head over all things on our side. When you feel weak, confused, inept, ready to throw in the towel, etc., remember that the Head over all things has been given to the church to act on our behalf. "Yeah, but what about when we're persecuted, or shamed, or we've appeared to lose some battle, or we're under some affliction, or we're suffering, etc?" All are necessary! He knows what we need. He knows what is required to bring us home.

The church is further described like this: "which is His body." The church is His body. So, we have a double meaning for the word "head" here. He is head over all things, in the sense that He is the sovereign ruler over everything. But He is head over the church in a special way – He is the Head and we are the body. We are in an organic, vital union with Him. The Head and the body can never be separated (Romans 8:35-39). He provides life and strength and movement to us, and the implication is that the body lives in subjection and obedience to the Head. There are a lot of things I could say about this metaphor of the body, and we'll come across this (Lord willing) in later chapters but let me say two things. First, what happens when part of your body gets hurt? The rest of the body rushes to its aid. Your eyes examine, your mouth cries for help, you shield and protect, you compensate for the injury, etc. Second, what happens when you are excited? The whole body is involved. You might sing, you might leap

for joy, your eyes might light up, you might shout or cheer, you might throw a fist into the air, you might even dance a jig.

The church is even further described as “the fulness of Him that filleth all in all.” As far as I’m concerned, this is the most amazing part of the whole passage. I read this to mean that the Lord Jesus Christ doesn’t consider Himself to be complete without His church. As a head is incomplete without its body, a bridegroom is incomplete without his bride, a shepherd is incomplete without his sheep, a vine is incomplete without its branches. Now, we are wont to say that God doesn’t need us, so some of you might squirming in your seats a little bit. I’m not saying that there is some deficiency in Christ where He needs us – in fact, the “Him that filleth all in all” part is there to keep us from that error. He fills the universe with everything it needs to be sustained, He specifically fills the church with grace, strength, etc., and He also works through the church to spread His glory through heaven and earth. As God, He is and always has been complete in and of Himself. But in taking on the office of Mediator between God and man, He has chosen to unite Himself to us (He is the Head; we are the body) and He will not consider His body to be complete until the last one of His people is called and incorporated into Him. John Calvin said, *“This is the highest honor of the Church, that, until He is united to us, the Son of God reckons himself in some measure imperfect. What consolation is it for us to learn, that, not until we are along with him, does he possess all his parts, or wish to be regarded as complete!”* Beloved, the One who is the powerful Sovereign over the whole universe is the One who considers us to be His fulness, and all the power that He has at His disposal is exercised to make sure His body is complete.

So, to conclude, we have Paul informing the Ephesians that he has been thanking God for them continually and offering up petitions on their behalf. The main petition is that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so that they would have a deep and precise knowledge of God. Having, therefore, the eyes of their understanding enlightened, he fleshes that out with three additional petitions: 1. That they would know what is the hope of His calling. 2. That they would know what is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. 3. That they would know what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward. The emphasis is on the power of God, as it has been wrought in Christ. He will continue this topic in chapter 2, specifically in relation to our salvation. Lord willing, I plan to go over 2:1-10 next time.

**Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen. (Jude 24-25)**