**A Prayer for Ascending Wisdom**

*Ephesians 1:15-23*

**Introduction**

1. Paul customarily mentioned the content of his continual prayers on behalf of those to whom he was writing.
2. These prayers were always inclusive of spiritual growth.
   1. The primary concern Paul had was for the spiritual well-being of his brethren.
3. Having noted the tremendous blessings found in Christ **(Ephesians 1:3-14)**, Paul made mention of his persistent prayers on behalf of the Ephesians **(Ephesians 1:15-23)**.
4. The content of his prayer on their behalf represents knowledge and wisdom that are indispensable for living the transformed life and getting to heaven.
5. The Spirit of Wisdom and Revelation in the Knowledge of Him
6. Paul’s thanksgiving for the Ephesians **(vv. 15-16)** turns to supplication on their behalf for spiritual growth **(vv. 17-19).**
7. Spirit
   1. Whatever this ***“spirit”*** is that Paul prays for them to be given has to do with ***“wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him,”*** but equates with ***“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”***
      1. This does not necessitate the Holy Spirit. (Definite article not there)
      2. Spirit used in the sense of a disposition.
   2. ***“Spirit”*** as a disposition:
      1. **1 Corinthians 4:21; Galatians 6:1** – “spirit of gentleness”
      2. **Romans 8:15** – “spirit of bondage…spirit of adoption”
      3. **2 Timothy 1:7** – “spirit of fear…power…love…sound mind”
      4. Used to denote that which characterizes a person, what guides, influences, and governs a person with the specific quality mentioned (gentleness, fear, love, etc.).
   3. Prayer for a disposition, quality, or character marked by ***“wisdom and revelation.”***
      1. Not miraculously accomplished.
      2. Through interest in the spiritual matters, and diligent study and meditation – **Psalm 1:2; 19:10; 40:8; 119:10-11, 15-16; 2 Timothy 2:15**
      3. The children of God should be people marked by an intense interest in scripture/spiritual things.
         1. Matters of spiritual blessings (**Ephesians 1:3-14**) followed by this prayer of Paul that they would be ever increasing in their experience with, and admiration of these blessings.
8. Wisdom and Revelation
   1. These two are not separate concepts Paul wishes to enumerate, but inseparable as a unit – one following from the other.
      1. I.e. WISDOM COMING FROM REVELATION.
      2. Yet, not simply God’s general revelation, but understanding such personally.
         1. God has revealed, but some are still blind – **2 Corinthians 4:3-4**
         2. However, God has revealed that we might know personally, i.e. understand the revelation ourselves – **Ephesians 3:3-4; 5:17**
   2. Paul’s prayer is that they would become more acquainted with the gospel message:
      1. **2 Peter 3:18** – command to grow.
      2. **1 Corinthians 2:6** – receive wisdom spoken to mature.
      3. **Colossians 1:9** – knowledge, wisdom, spiritual understanding.
      4. Not merely knowing the facts, but comprehending their place, and how they relate to us – **Luke 2:46-47, 52** (Jesus at 12 – not just fact knowledge, but understanding, comprehension); **Acts 8:30-31** (do you understand?)
9. The Knowledge of Him
   1. This disposition, quality, and character marked by a relationship with God’s word in comprehension is further designated by the specific content of ***“the knowledge of Him.”***
      1. Him – Christ – **Ephesians 1:3** – spiritual blessings in Him.
   2. Knowledge – *epignōsis* – strengthened form of gnosis.
      1. Not simply an intellectual grasp on truth, but the uniting with truth by the practice of it.
      2. “The intellect is exercised to its fullest capacity but only as the avenue to the heart and the soul. Unless the latter is reached, the intellect fails to serve its purpose; mere historical or head knowledge is not enough.” (Lenski)
   3. **2 Peter 1:3** – all things pertaining to life and godliness through the knowledge (epignosis) of Him.
      1. I.e. through coming to know about Him, then following Him.
   4. **1 John 2:3-6** – know Him, keep commandments, keep word, walk as He walked.
10. Paul specifies what it is that he is praying they comprehend further in the new walk with Christ – this is to the end of their reaching the goal of heaven, and overcoming the adversary he speaks about in chapter 6.
11. Ascending Wisdom
12. Knowing the Hope of His Calling
    1. Context of those being addressed:
       1. **(1:3-12)** – us, we, we who first trusted **(v. 12).**
       2. **(1:13-23)** – you also, you, your, (but mixed with) our and us.
       3. **(2:1-2)** – you.
       4. **(2:3)** – we all, our.
       5. **(2:4-10)** – us, we, (exception of) you **(v. 8).**
       6. **1:12** – ***“we who first trusted”***
          1. ***“we who were the first to hope in Christ” (NASB)***
          2. ***“first trusted”*** – *proelpizō* (1x) – to hope in advance of other confirmation (STRONG)
             1. “pro, “before,” and elpizo [to hope]” (VINE)
             2. “to be prior in hoping” (BDAG)

“hope is prior to realization” (BDAG)

* + - 1. Contrast – Jews and Gentiles (Jews first – **cf. Romans 1:16)**
      2. **(v. 12)** – ***“in Christ”*** – i.e. not Jesus, but the Messiah (before He was manifested to be the man Jesus).
         1. **(2:11-13)** – were without hope in Christ, but by ***“CHRIST JESUS”*** brought near.
         2. The Messiah realized in Jesus brought salvation/hope to both Jews and Gentiles (though Jews first).
  1. **Ephesians 1:18** – i.e. there is hope in His calling, whereas before you lived without any expectation of future blessing.
     1. His calling is not aimless, but to a special end (goal) **– 2 Thessalonians 2:14**
  2. State without hope – **1 Corinthians 15:19** – a pitiable life.
  3. Now that they have hope in Christ, Paul’s desire is for them to fully experience/know that:
     1. Not merely head knowledge, but experiential knowledge – I.E. LIVING A LIFE LIKE A PERSON OF HOPE.
     2. **1 Corinthians 15:32-34** – not aimless, or for passing pleasure, but in righteousness knowing eternal implications of life.
        1. **1 Corinthians 15:58** – steadfast, immovable, always abounding.
     3. **Romans 8:25** – perseverance.
        1. Doing good no matter what (suffering) – **1 Peter 3:13-15** (ready to give an answer for such confidence leading to that way of life.)
        2. **Philippians 3:17-20a** – walking as those who are citizens of heaven.
  4. From here, Paul progresses in his petition for their growing wisdom from the hope which lies within them to the further consideration of the object of hope itself which lies beyond this world – above (**cf. Colossians 3:1-2)** (hence, the ascending nature of the request for wisdom).

1. Knowing the Riches of the Glory of His Inheritance
   1. To leave hope as some unspecified, generic matter is to leave out the aspiration to which hope is intended. We need to understand the aim of our hope, the object of our hope, in order to be driven by it.
   2. First understand its value:
      1. ***“inheritance”*** – this is the object of the hope.
      2. ***“riches of the glory of…”*** – describing its value.
         1. ***“the glory”*** – describes the inheritance.
            1. Promised by the Father of glory – **(Ephesians 1:17)**
            2. To sons of the Father of glory – **(Ephesians 1:5)**
         2. ***“the riches”*** – describes the glory.
      3. Using multiple terms to describe the immense value of the object of our hope. (***cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17 – “a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory”***)
   3. Inheritance – **1 Peter 1:3-4**
      1. Connected with – ***“living hope THROUGH the resurrection of Christ”***
         1. NOTE: Value in the description of what it isn’t – **(v. 4)**
      2. Explained by Paul – **1 Corinthians 15:19-23** – hope connected with resurrection.
         1. Firstfruits – ***“afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming”*** – i.e. rest to follow.
         2. Resurrection to a spiritual body – **1 Corinthians 15:42-49**
         3. This, to inherit the kingdom of God – **1 Corinthians 15:50** (Place in heaven)
   4. Not given to know the exact description of what it will be (likely not something comprehensible to our finite mind), but we know it corresponds to the glory of the life as children of God – **1 John 3:1-3**
      1. To know, i.e. the full knowledge discussed by Paul, the riches of the glory of His inheritance is to live holy lives.
      2. Live like you belong somewhere else, somewhere where righteousness dwells – **Philippians 3:20-4:1; 2 Peter 3:13**
   5. From here, Paul progresses from the object of hope that is the inheritance of the resurrected body which gains entrance into heaven to the indispensable power we depend on to reach that goal – ***“His [God’s] power”*** – hence, the further progression upward as far as we can go.
      1. Our inner self must be constantly peering beyond the seen, upwards into the unseen things of God, and looking to God Himself for strength.
2. Knowing the Exceeding Greatness of His Power
   1. Lastly, Paul’s request of God is for their full, experiential knowledge of “the power which guarantees the final bestowal of this inheritance in the fulfillment of our hope” (Lenski).
   2. ***“exceeding greatness of His power toward us”*** – not simply power, nor great power, but exceedingly great power.
   3. ***“according to”*** – i.e. there is a specific point of reference in history concerning a display of God’s power which Paul intimately ties to the power working in the believer. (I.e. not abstractly, but concretely.)
      1. **Ephesians 1:20-23** – in Christ’s resurrection, ascension, and dominion.
         1. **(v. 20a)** – raised from dead.
         2. **(v. 20b)** – ascended, seated at right hand (authority)
         3. **(v. 21)** – scope of authority. (**cf. Philippians 2:9** – name above all names)
         4. **(vv. 22-23)** – dominion.
      2. Secondly – alluding to a point in the past where that power was administered by God to the one who believed – **Ephesians 2:1-10** (initial salvation – baptism descriptions)
         1. **(v. 1)** – ***“and you”*** – as an extension of His remarks of God’s power at work.
            1. ***“who were dead…”***
         2. **(vv. 5-6)** – made alive with Christ, raised us to a new position in heavenly places.
         3. **(v. 10)** – created for good works.
            1. Whereas before dead works – **(v. 3).**
      3. But he’s speaking to current Christians about their need to fully know that power…
         1. ***(v. 19) – “power toward us who believe”*** – present active verb
         2. Power is still at work, and needs to be fully realized.
   4. **1 Peter 1:5** – keeping by the power of God through faith for the inheritance.
      1. The power working in us is connected with faith.
      2. Faith comes by God’s word – **Romans 10:17**
      3. The gospel is God’s power to save – **Romans 1:16**
      4. In order to fully know the power that is working in us toward our hope realized we must be learning and submitting to the gospel message.
   5. **2 Peter 1:2-4, 10-11** – speaks of the power that works in us, appropriated the same way, through the fulness of the knowledge of Him (epignōsis)
      1. **(v. 3)** – divine power (in the gospel)
         1. Life and godliness – in knowledge (epignōsis).
         2. I.e. in participating in that gospel message concerning Him.
      2. **(v. 4)** – promises to partake of the divine nature (Fellowship with God through PRACTICING KNOWLEDGE).
      3. **(vv. 10-11)** – such makes our call and election sure, and gives us entrance into heaven.
   6. **2 Peter 3:18** – Such growth in the knowledge of Christ is to know the power of God working in us toward the goal of our inheritance.
      1. As we’re ever being changed by the power of God in the gospel into the image of Christ, we know we will be fully changed into the image of Christ by the power of God in the end. (**Cf. Romans 8:29-30** – image of Son is the goal, called, justified, glorified is the process)

**Conclusion**

1. As we’ve experienced blessings in Christ upon obeying the gospel, it is important that we continue to feed that hunger of spiritual things.
2. We need to ever increase in the wisdom of God, and allow that to change our lives.
3. Our sights should be set on things above, considering ourselves in light of eternity, and looking up to God for the strength to guide us home.