

Fact Sheet for **“An Intimate Knowledge of God”**
Ephesians 1:15-23

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Chapter 1 of Ephesians is only three sentences long (1-2, 3-14, 15-23), that is in Greek. We saw in that second sentence a marvelous statement about the greatness of our salvation in Christ. Today we will be considering that third sentence.

¹⁵ ¶ For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, ¹⁶ I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,

“For this reason” – verses 3-14 (God's election, predestination, adoption, grace, redemption, forgiveness, wisdom, understanding, knowledge of the mystery of his will, the sealing of the Holy Spirit, inheritance)

“faith” and “love” – their vertical relationship and their horizontal relationships – A proper relationship with God should lead to a proper relationship with other Christians. This was a common theme with Paul (Colossians 1:3-4; 2 Thessalonians 1:3). That relationship between our faith in God and our love for other Christians can put us to the test at times. However we need to pursue both. Paul could see the results of spiritual life in them, and this is why he remembered them in his prayers.

¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, ^{18a} having the eyes of your hearts enlightened,

“that” – literally “in order that” – This word tells you what Paul was praying for. He prayed that God may give them “the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation”.

The word “may” indicates a hesitating affirmation. The hesitation might possibly come not from God's side but from theirs. The question was whether they were willing.

“Wisdom” is easy enough to understand, but what about “revelation” (the Greek word is pronounced apocalypse). Don't be afraid of this word. It only means an unveiling or a disclosing. Paul was praying for them to grow in wisdom and understanding.

Now be careful here. Some translations capitalize the word “Spirit” to indicate the Holy Spirit, and some do not indicating spiritual wisdom and insight. The translation of this word could go either way. I understand these words to indicate spiritual wisdom and insight. As Christians they already had the Holy Spirit (1:13-14). They didn't need the Holy Spirit to be given to them. At the same time it is the Holy Spirit who leads us into truth. What they needed was a deeper understanding of God and his desires for them, and they needed to be open to him.

Still it meant something a bit different for the Ephesians than it does for us. Less than half of the NT had been written when Paul penned this letter to them. Think about Paul's use of the word “revelation” in their context. Today we have the completed NT, but we still need to rely on the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to the scripture.

This is where the word “enlightened” is significant. The word “enlightened” is in a very interesting tense. It is a present tense truth that is rooted in a past action. They had access to the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit because they had the Holy Spirit. The question was whether they would make use of the enlightenment that was available from God.

God revealed his thoughts to us in the Bible. He inspired the words of the text. But we need the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit to take that truth to heart. Non-Christians can't do this (1 Corinthians 2:14). Christians have a choice to take it or not.

Also the word translated “knowledge” indicates a full knowledge or an intimate knowledge of God. This is not mere book knowledge. It is an intimate awareness of God’s character and will. Philosophy says, “Know yourself.” Christianity says, “Know God through Christ.”

^{18b} that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, ¹⁹ and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might

This English word “that” actually translates a different Greek word than the one beginning verse 17. Here it indicates the ultimate purpose or the intended result of the enlightenment spoken of in the previous verse.

“that you may know the hope (sure and certain) to which he has called you” – Remind yourself often of God’s salvation in Christ for you personally. Think about what he has done for you. That hope includes thinking about the great inheritance we have in Christ (Ephesians 1:11). It also includes an appreciation of God’s power toward us who believe.

There are four words for power here. They are best seen in the NASB.

^{NAU} **Ephesians 1:19** and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. *These are* in accordance with the working of the strength of His might

“power” – a word from which we get our word “dynamite”, “working” – a word from which we get our word “energy”, “strength” – a word from which we get the second half of our word “democrat”, “might”

Paul would later use three of these terms in relation to the Ephesians.

^{ESV} **Ephesians 6:10** ¶ Finally, be strong (powerful) in the Lord and in the strength of his might.

God can work powerfully in our lives if we let him and trust him. Do you know people who identify as Christians but who lack the evidence of God’s power over sin. Is the problem on God’s side or on theirs (see Romans 6:17-18)?

God used His power with Christ.

²⁰ that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, ²¹ far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. ²² And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, ²³ which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

The first part of verse 22 is an allusion to Psalm 8:6 referring to Christ.¹

^{ESV} **Psalm 8:6** You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

If you listen to preachers and it sounds only like so much religious talk that doesn’t correspond with reality then you should really review your faith in the God of the Bible.

If you are a Christian who lacks God’s power in your life then you should think through the choices you are making in life.

If you are feeling challenged in your faith and are praying for God’s wisdom for what is ahead then you are on the right track. Use this opportunity to strengthen your faith.

¹ See also 1 Corinthians 15:27 and Hebrews 2:6-8.