TWO THINGS YOU MAY ASK OF GOD

1 *15For this reason, I, indeed—having heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and the love that you have for all the saints—16do not cease giving thanks for you, mentioning you in my prayers. 17[I pray] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, would give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to gain insight in his knowledge, 18since he has enlightened the eyes of your heart. [I pray that] you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance for the saints. 19And [I pray that you may know] the immeasurable greatness of his power [available] to us who believe; [the power that is] in accord with the working of the might of his strength, 20which worked in Christ, raising him from the dead and seating him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.* (Eph. 1:15-20)

Introduction

If you were granted a personal interview with God, what would you ask Him? Would you ask, Why did You allow the devil to rebel and sin to enter into the world? Would you ask, Why did You allow such and such an event to happen in my life? Would you ask, When are You coming back?

In response to such questions as these, the LORD might reply, "These are things you are not yet able to handle, but you will be granted greater understanding at the proper time. At present, you do not yet possess the spiritual comprehension to understand these things." By way of illustration: If your son, who is presently working on second grade math, asked you to explain to him the equation, E=MC2, even though you might know the answer, you could not yet explain it to him because he does not yet possess the level of mathematical understanding that is necessary.

If you were granted a personal interview with God, a very wise question to ask Him would be this: LORD, what do You desire for me to know at this present time? What would be most beneficial for me to know? Such a question as this would show a great deal of child-like confidence in your heavenly Father, and would indicate a great deal of spiritual maturity. Such a question as this the heavenly Father would be delighted to answer.

As a matter of fact, we do not even need to be granted a special interview to address such a question to Him; He has provided the answer to such a question in this very passage of Scripture (Ephesians 1:15-20.) Paul is requesting that the Holy Spirit, in His capacity as *"the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,"* would share His knowledge with the believer, in particular, with regard to two things: the hope of God's calling (vs. 18) and the divine power God has made available to the Christian (vs. 19.)

The Apostle Paul makes known to us his prayer for the church. Writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul is writing and praying in accordance with the Holy Spirit's will. So, when we consider what Paul asks of God on behalf of the

church, we are at the very same time considering what God desires to give to the church.

As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, we have a right and a need to know those things of God that have special meaning for us. Because we are children of God in Christ, we may ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us concerning the things God wants us to know. Two such things are mentioned in the apostle's prayer on behalf of the Ephesian church.

I. Ask the Holy Spirit to Enlighten You
... with regard to "the Hope of God's Calling" (1:18)

In contrast to the world, the Christian is identified as someone who has hope. The spiritual condition of the world is described in the following terms: *"having no hope and being without God"* (Eph. 2:12b.) Ephesians 4:17-19 presents a description of futility, alienation, wantonness; a description of despair and hopelessness—such is the condition of the world outside of Christ:

> *... you must no longer walk like the Gentiles who walk in the futility of their mind. [18]They are darkened in their understanding, they are separated from the life of God; because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardness of their heart. [19]Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity with the lust for more.* (Eph. 4:17-19)

The Christian possesses a very precious spiritual commodity: hope. The Apostle Peter describes that hope as follows: *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who in accordance with his great mercy has given us new birth for a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead"* (1 Pet. 1:3.) *"A living hope,"* in contrast to "a dead hope," is a hope that is certain and sure, one that shall not prove to be false or disappointing.

The hope that the Christian possesses is not an abstract, nebulous thing; on the contrary, it is defined by the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 1:18 as *"the hope of [God's] calling."* That is to say, it is the future purpose for which God has called the believer in Christ Jesus. In the Book of Revelation, using symbolic language, our Lord reveals some of the aspects of this divine calling: The Christian is granted the right to *"eat from the tree of life"* (Rev. 2:7;) this is speaking of the right to experience and enjoy eternal life in the Paradise of God. Here is the privilege of gaining access to the presence and blessing of God, such as is described in Psalm 16:11, *"You will show me the path of life. In your presence is fullness of joy; in your right hand are pleasures for evermore"* (Psl. 16:11.) The Christian is promised *"the Morning Star"* (Rev. 2:28,) this is expressing the privilege of participation in the glory of Christ our Savior, as the Lord promises in Matthew 13:43, *"Then the righteous shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."* The Christian is called to sit with Christ on His throne (Rev. 3:21,) here is the promise of sharing with God in His divine rule and dominion.

The hope of God's calling is further defined by Paul as *"the riches of the glory of his inheritance for the saints."* As we learn from 1 Corinthians 2:9, *"Things that the eye has not seen and the ear has not heard and that have not entered into the heart of man, these are the things God has prepared for those who love him."* Note: The Bible also speaks about the riches of the glory of God's own inheritance **in** the saints. Scripture defines the church of Christ as being God's inheritance, an extremely valuable, precious inheritance that will be to Him a wealth of glory. Christ *"shall come to be glorified in his saints"* (2 Thess. 1:10.) God's people shall be *"Oaks of Righteousness, planted by Jehovah, so that he may be glorified"* (Isa. 61:3.)

The Apostle Paul's request—and God's desire—is that the Holy Spirit will make these things known to us in a deeper and more meaningful way. The Christian has the right to receive this wonderful truth, because by means of the converting work of the Holy Spirit these things form the hope of his calling (i.e.; the things he has been called to experience.) Furthermore, it is by means of his conversion that the Christian has the capacity to receive the revelation of these things—by means of the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, the Christian has had *"the eyes of his heart enlightened."* This is why Paul prays that the Holy Spirit—in His capacity as *"the Spirit of wisdom and revelation"*—would cause us as Christians to **know** these things: to comprehend them; to appreciate them; and even now in some measure to experience them.

Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you concerning *"the hope of [God's] calling."* Ask the Holy Spirit to help you know in a deeper and more personal way the glorious life and purpose to which God has called you in Christ.

II. Ask the Holy Spirit to Enlighten You ...with regard to "the Immeasurable Greatness of God's Power Available to Us" (1:19)

The Apostle Paul further prays—and God further desires—that we as Christians may know *"the immeasurable greatness of his power available to us who believe."* It is God's desire that we should know—that we should become acquainted with and rely upon—the awesome, immeasurable power of God.

By way of illustration: Engineers were confronted with the problem, How to raise a submerged barge full of stone from the muddy bottom of New York harbor. It was quickly discovered that there was no crane powerful enough to do the job. What was the solution? The engineers called for two other barges to be brought to the location. The barges were then positioned on either side of the sunken barge. Cables were attached from the floating barges to the sunken barge while the waters were at low tide. As the tide rose, the floating barges were lifted and the attached cables lifted the sunken barge to the surface. The submerged barge was lifted when the engineers tapped into the awesome, silent power of

the Atlantic Ocean (*Our Daily Bread*, 9/12/92.) God desires for us as Christians to know and avail ourselves of His awesome, immeasurable divine power.

This power of God of which the apostle speaks is the very power God employed when He raised Christ from the dead. It is the omnipotent power that broke open a sealed tomb. It is the life giving power that raised Jesus' dead body to renewed vitality. It is the transforming power that not only restored Jesus' body to life but also changed it into a glorious new level of being—fit for life in God's new creation.

This awesome power of God is available to us: may we know the immeasurable greatness of his power available *"to us."* God desires to employ this awesome power on our behalf and for our spiritual benefit for the accomplishment of His good purpose. Philippians 4:12-13 provides a testimony of what this power can accomplish: *"I have experienced poverty and I have experienced abundance; by every circumstance and in every circumstance—whether well fed or hungry, whether experiencing abundance or poverty—I have learned the secret [of how to be content]. [13]I am able to do all things by him who gives me strength."* The power of God can enable the Christian to be content.

Colossians 1:11 provides another example of what that power can accomplish: *"being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience with joy;"* the power of God can enable the Christian to endure trial with patience, longsuffering and joy.

Philippians 3:21 provides an example of what that power will accomplish: *"By the power that enables him to bring everything into submission to himself, he will transform the body belonging to the present state of our humiliation, so that it may be conformed to his glorified body."*

This awesome power of God is transferred into "kinetic energy"—active, useful, operating power—by means of faith. Paul's prayer is that we may know the greatness of his power, a power available *"to us who believe."* The Greek verb, "to believe," occurs in the present participle form, indicating a present, ongoing, active faith in Christ. Paul here is not merely speaking of Christians as people who have recognized Christ as the Savior and have placed their faith in Him at the time of conversion. He is here speaking of an active faith in Christ that depends upon the Savior day by day and in so doing experiences His divine power.

Note the contrast between 1 Thessalonians 2:13 and Mark 6:5-6. 1 Thessalonians 2:13 speaks about that kind of active faith that experiences God's power: *"we also thank God continually because, when you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God, that works in you who believe."* In this passage, too, the verb "believe" occurs in the present participle form, indicating the one who is

believing. In contrast, Mark 6:5-6 speaks about a lack of practical faith that shuts one off from experiencing the power of Christ: *"He could not do any mighty work there; although he did lay his hands upon a few sick people and heal them. 6He was amazed at their unbelief. Then he went around from village to village teaching."* Will you allow your life to be characterized by practical unbelief, or by practical, active faith, the faith that experiences the awesome power of God? The Apostle Paul's request—and God's desire—is that we may **know** this awesome power of God in our everyday life.

Ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten you concerning the immeasurable greatness of God's power available to us—that divine power He graciously makes available to us and desires to impart to our lives. God desires for us to become acquainted with this spiritual power and to avail ourselves of it for the living of our Christian lives.

Conclusion

There are many things we may desire to know, many questions we may desire to ask of God. Things and questions concerning which God would reply, "At present you have neither the spiritual capacity nor maturity to handle the answer."

But here in Ephesians 1:15-20 we have presented to us two things God earnestly desires for us to know: God wants us to know what is the hope of His divine calling. God wants us to know what is the immeasurable greatness of His power, which He makes available to us for our Christian lives. Since these things are indispensable for living a confident and productive Christian life, let us ask the Holy Spirit to enlighten us and make these things known to us as a practical, transforming reality in our lives.