



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Ephesians 1:15-19

Ephesians

"A Prayer for Knowledge"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] Well, this morning, we're continuing in Ephesians chapter 1, and we'll look at verses 15 through 19. Ephesians chapter 1, and Paul writes beginning with verse 15:

"For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you – " and I want to stop and make a brief comment. That expression, "For this reason," obviously looks to something that has been previously said. But he doesn't state what the reason is that he gives thanks. Now, I think he does, in that he speaks of the faith that he's heard of. But that, I believe, is what he's referring to back in verse 13, where he says, "In Him – " that is, in Christ – "You also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise. So I think what he's referring to there is the faith that they have in Christ, and that gives him great reason for thanksgiving.

And so he's referring to that when he says, "For this reason, I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers; that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will 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 surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in accordance with the working of the strength of His might."

May the Lord bless this reading of His Word and bless our time of study together. Let's bow now in a word of prayer.

[Prayer] Our gracious heavenly Father, we are greatly privileged to be here this morning, to be here as the body of Jesus Christ, a people who have been chosen from eternity past, purchased in time by the precious blood of your Son and brought to a saving knowledge of you and a saving knowledge of Him through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Father, we praise you for that because we recognize that we are yours, through no work of our own, through no merit of our own but solely and completely because of your grace, your mercy, which is undeserved. And what a privilege it is, Father, to join together with the saints that we are this morning and open up the Scriptures, your revelation to us, and study the things that the apostle Paul has written. And what wonderful he has written of. He reminds us, this morning, of the blessings that are ours in Christ, the riches that we have in Him. Father, we confess that so often we live lives ignorantly of the truth, of the blessings that are ours in Him.

Awaken us to what we have that we might live in light of them, we might live in the power that Paul speaks of, and we might live lives that are pleasing to you, lives, first of all, of private and quiet devotion to you. We recognize, Lord, that what really pleases you most of all is not the great things we do in this world. It's our walk with you; it's our fellowship with you. It's growing in our knowledge of you and in our devotion to you. And from that come acts that are pleasing to you and beneficial to others.

But it begins with our walk with you. And so, Father, we pray that you would instill within us a desire to simply know you better, to live lives of devoted service to you; that as we do that, then we will desire to be devoted servants to others. We pray for all of that,

Father, and pray that you would use our time together this morning to bring that to pass. We are a people who have many needs, Father, and we are a people with physical needs as well as spiritual. And we pray about those as well.

We ask that you would bless the sick. We pray that you'd strengthen them and give them healing. We think of Dr. Howard and the recovery that he's making at this present time and the discomfort that he must be going through. We pray that you would ease that and that you would give a speedy recovery to him. We pray for those who are bereaved, who are mourning the passing of loved ones; encourage them and strengthen them.

We pray for the unemployed, and pray that you might supply them with work and encouragement. We pray for those who are on the retreat, that you bless the final hours of that retreat, and give them a safe return home. And for others who are traveling as well, we pray for them that you give them safety in their return. We pray for Dr. Johnson, that you bless the time that he's spent up in Buffalo and that the series of talks that he has given will be very fruitful, and that they would come back safely also. Thank you, Father, for our time this morning and pray you bless it.

And bless us as we return this evening and as we celebrate the Lord's Supper and we think of what He has done for us; His death on our behalf, and the taking away of our sins through His precious blood and the hope that we have at His return. We are to do that, to take that Supper until He comes. And that is the reminder to us that He is coming again. Every time we take the Supper, Father, we are reminded that the day will come when we will no longer do that, no longer take it because He will be with us and we will see Him face-to-face. Help us to live in light of that.

Bless us now, Lord, as we sing our final hymn. May it be good preparation for our souls as we begin to feed them with your truth. And may we be blessed together this morning as we do so. We pray these things in Christ's name. Amen.

[Message] Francis Bacon made a statement that is true and often quoted, when he wrote: "Knowledge itself is power. That's true in any field of life. To do math, a person must have knowledge of the rules and axioms of mathematics. To learn business or law, a person has to know the language of business and the language of law, has to have a knowledge of the technical terms and the – and understand the principles behind it. And to simply communicate with others we have to know language.

In every field of life, a person is empowered to function in it, in that field, in that discipline, through knowledge. And that is true of the Christian life as well. Knowledge is the way to spiritual power because it opens up to us an understanding of riches that we have but we be unaware of. Let me illustrate. There was an odd-looking hill in Turkey near the sea, in which were buried ancient treasures that no one knew about until they were discovered by a young man, a son of a poor German pastor, named Heinrich Schliemann.

When he was 7 years old, he was given a picture of ancient Troy in flames, and it captured his imagination. In his day, scholars believed that Homer's Iliad was just a myth. But Schliemann was convinced that it was true, and he made it his life's ambition to discover the site of the ancient city and the battlefield. He did that in 1873. And when he did, he uncovered thousands of Trojan treasures: Gold goblets, bracelets, necklaces, rings, diadems, which he smuggled out of Turkey, treasures that had been there for millennium but were hidden in the darkness and undiscovered and unpossessed because they were unknown.

Now, Christians have treasures, too, and we have treasures that are far greater than Trojan treasures. We have "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places," Paul says. But they can go unpossessed in the sense that they can go unenjoyed unless we know about them. And so we need to learn. And that's what Paul's desire was for the Ephesians, for the churches of Asia Minor, for us today;

that we learn, that we increase in knowledge; in the knowledge of God, in the knowledge of the things of God and what we have in Him.

And that's what Paul prayed for. In fact, the first chapter of Ephesians can be divided into two main sections. The first one is one of praise, and the second one is one of prayer. In verses 3 through 14, the passage that we have been studying for some weeks, Paul composes a doxology in which he praises each member of the Trinity for His work in our salvation, and for the many blessings that God has given to us. And then, in the remaining verses, he prays for the Ephesians, that they would understand the fullness of those blessings that had been given to them in Christ, that the eyes of their heart "may be enlightened," that they may be opened to their riches.

He begins his prayer with praise to God, a way in which many prayers are begun. And he begins with thanksgiving, thanksgiving for the good news that he had heard about the Ephesians. Paul was in prison in Rome and so he hadn't been in Ephesus for some three or four years. But in that imprisonment, he was allowed to have visitors, and they would come to him and bring news of the churches. And the reports that he heard about Ephesus and the churches of that region were very encouraging.

He was encouraged about the faith that they had, their faith, as he says, "in Christ," and their "love for all the saints." And because of that, Paul says, he gave thanks. In fact, he says that he never ceased to give thanks for them. If you'll notice, Paul doesn't give them thanks for them. He thanks God for them because God was the reason for them.

He was the cause of their faith, He was the source of their love, the source of all the blessings that they had and that they were working out in their life toward one another. That's the reason that he addresses this praise and thanksgiving in his prayer to God. He thanks God because God is the origin or the source of all of that. They are someone, or a group to be thankful for because they are the work of God's grace.

And that fact is clear not only from Paul's prayer. It's not only the obvious implication that we would draw from the fact that he's praying to God and giving thanks to God in his prayer, but also from the account of how this church began. And it had an amazing beginning. Luke records it, in Acts chapter 19, how Paul preached the gospel in Ephesus, and through him God performed extraordinary miracles, Luke says, "so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out."

Great miracles occurred in Ephesus in an obvious demonstration of divine power, with the result that fear came upon both Jews and gentiles in the city and many believed. Luke writes of that in verse 18 through 20 or chapter 19 of the book of acts. He said, "Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing."

Well, that's the power of the Word of God. That's the power of God behind His Word and the preaching of the gospel. And when the gospel was preached in that very pagan city, it brought about a very obvious and undeniable change in the people who heard and believed. They were called out of darkness, the darkness of paganism and called into the light of God's truth and the light of His life. And they continued to grow.

Over the years, they grew in their faith, and others were added to their numbers. Their faith in Christ was well grounded. It was real; it was alive. There was no denying that. Those were the reports that were going out about this church. And the proof of the vitality of their faith, the faith that Paul was so thankful for, was their love for the saints, for the brethren.

And those two always go together. Where there is genuine faith, there will be love for the brethren, for the people of God. Christ has

been compared to a great magnet. He not only draws us to Himself, but in so doing, draws us together. And the Ephesians were people who had been drawn together in love for one another, and that's the evidence of their true faith.

It's the mark of a Christian. Our Lord tells us that in John 13, where the upper-room discourse, or the farewell discourse begins. And there He tells His disciples: "By this, all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another," love in a sense of sacrificial service. That's what love is. John brings that out in 1 John, chapter 3 in verse 18, when he writes: "Let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth."

Now, that's not to say you're not to say "I love you" to someone or express your love in verbal ways. But his point is it's not just that. That's not really love if it's speech but it doesn't do. No, we're to love in deed and truth. Love is active; love serves.

And the Lord made that clear before He gave that instruction about all men knowing that we are His disciples if we love one another, by giving a great demonstration of love. When he got up from the table and girded Himself with a towel, he knelt down and began to wash the dirty feet of those disciples. That was love in action. And so often we confuse love with emotion, with feelings and affection, which can be little more than sentimentality. Love involves emotion, and I think that where there's genuine love and that love is growing, there will be a sense of emotion.

There will be an affection for those that we love. But it's not just that. In fact, I don't think it's principally that. I think, principally, love is service gladly given. And the Ephesians were well known for their love for the saints.

In fact, Paul says, "for all the saints." Not just some and not just the attractive ones, not just the pleasant ones. We're not all pleasant and we're not all attractive, and we're always in need of the grace of God. And they loved all the saints, he said. They didn't

discriminate in their love, just as Christ doesn't discriminate in His love.

He loves all believers equally and He loves them infinitely. And we can't infinitely, but we are to love equally as the Ephesians did. That's the way we are to do. There is no substitute for love. Without it, Paul says, we can know a great deal. We can even have our theology straight.

"But if we don't have love, we are nothing more," he told the Corinthians, "than a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal." Loving the saints means loving *all* the saints. It means loving the pleasant ones and the unpleasant ones alike. It means bearing their burdens, their weaknesses, their unpleasantness, being of service and seeking to be a blessing to each other. That is really a great privilege we have.

One of the reasons why we are weak, one of the reasons why many of us are unpleasant or not particularly attractive, is that it gives us an opportunity to serve one another, as Christ did on our behalf. If everything was easy and everything was right, there'd be no service. We live in a very improper situation. Things aren't right, things aren't settled. And there's a reason for that.

It gives us opportunity to work out our faith toward one another. Paul says the Ephesians were doing that, and he was thankful for that. He was gratified by their stability in the faith and their progress in the faith, for all that he had heard about them. And so he thanked God and he prayed for them.

Now, that in itself is an example to us, Paul's praying for the people of Ephesus. When we love people, we respond the way Paul did. Paul was glad for their successes. Paul was glad for their development in the faith. And he prayed for them.

And when we love one another, we will do that. We will rejoice in the successes of one another, and we will pray for one another. And this is what Paul did. This is something of an example for us. And so I think, as we think about that, we could ask ourselves, "How often do we do that?"

How often do we get down on our knees daily and pray not only for ourselves – that's extremely important; we need to do that – but for one another, to give thanks for one another, to pray for the concerns and the needs of one another? It's not easy to do in the age in which we live. We're busy, there's time constraints, and we find ourselves letting things like studying the Scriptures and praying slip by. And it gets late in the evening, and we find that we haven't done it and we'll do it tomorrow. But the same problem exists.

It's not easy, but that is, I think, the mark of a Christian. Paul did this for these Ephesians. He prayed for them. In fact, he prayed continually for them. He says, "I do not cease giving thanks for you."

And that's the response of love which is the mark of the Christian. It rejoices in other believers; it's thankful. It moves us to bear each others burdens and pray for one another. Now, as I said, that's not easy. Love, really, in itself is impossible for us. So to say it's not easy is something of an understatement.

We cannot love anyone, and we cannot love the Christian brethren apart from the grace of God. Love's a gift. Paul says that in Romans 5 in verse 5, where he says that God has poured out His love within our heart. God pours it out. It comes from Him. I

n the fruit of the Spirit it is the first of the fruits that he lists. Love is a gift from God, and we're to know that. We're to know that so that we can ask God to make it active within us. It is one of the great spiritual blessings that is ours in Christ. So we have it; it's our possession.

It's one of those spiritual blessings in the heavenly places. We are to seek to live it though. We're to ask God to give us the grace to live within us and to work out this love within ourselves and our relationships with others. Paul was thankful that the Ephesians were doing that, and were well known for their faith in Christ and their love for His people. And that was not only something that characterized the church of Ephesus.

It characterized the early church. Tertullian was a 2nd century lawyer and apologist for the Christian faith. In his day, the Roman role was still very much pagan, and the church was, at that time, made up of small congregations scattered throughout the empire. The persecutions of Nero and Domitian and Trajan had not destroyed the church. In fact, the church had continued to grow.

And one of the reasons for its growth was the love that Christians had for one another. Tertullian writes of this, and he reports what the pagans were saying because they saw all of this. They saw the church; they saw Christians in their relationship with one another, and they were compelled to say, "See how these Christians love one another." What a testimony that was for the grace of God, the transforming grace of God within such a pagan, evil society. They saw the change and they commented on it.

Well, the church of Ephesus was also known for that. Paul didn't cease giving thanks for them. In his absence of some four or five years, they had continued to grow; were not dependent upon this one man, but in his absence they continued to grow in their knowledge of the grace of God. And their influence spread throughout that evil city and their numbers increased and they continued to develop. Now, he wanted them to continue to develop.

And so he not only thanked God for them, he also prayed for their spiritual growth. He prayed that they would have knowledge, specifically a knowledge of God. Verse 17: "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." Paul's great concern for them was not their physical well-being. It wasn't for their health or their safety or their financial situation.

Now, those are all real concerns. Those are all matters that we need to pray about. And we certainly do pray about them. They are matters of great concern to us. But that wasn't Paul's main concern.

That wasn't his great concern. "Nor," as John Stott points out, "did he pray that they might receive a second blessing; that is some

additional emotional experience or empowerment. His prayer is that they know more of what they already have. Not to seek for some blessing, but simply to realize and appreciate and live in the blessings that are already theirs."

Warren Wiersbe tells the story about the newspaper publisher, William Randolph Hearst, who was fabulously wealthy and had invested a fortune in collecting art treasures from all over the world. And one day he found a description of some valuable items that he felt that he must own. And so he sent his agent abroad to find them. After months of searching, the agent reported that he finally located the treasures. They were in Mr. Hearst's warehouse.

Hearst had searched frantically for treasures that he already owned. And he would have known that if he had simply read the catalog of his own treasures. Well Christians can be guilty of the same oversight. We have a catalog of our treasury. It's the New Testament.

It's really the whole Bible. And if we would read it and we would devote ourselves to the study of it and believe it, we would know the treasures that we possess. But as it is, we are often guilty of that same kind of oversight, of being ignorant of what we have, of our riches. And so Christians very often desperately seek some blessing, some second blessing. They seek blessing through emotional or mystical experience, or they seek reward through legalistic practices.

Christians can spend a great deal of time looking for blessings in the wrong places, not realizing that they already have them. We are rich in Jesus Christ; we have much. And so what we need is knowledge. And that is what Paul prayed for, an increase in their knowledge. And this is typical of Paul's prayers.

Read through the New Testament and you see very frequently examples such as Philippians 1 in verse 9. And he prays for the Philippians. He prays that their love would abound "in real knowledge and all discernment." In Colossians 1:9, he writes: "And we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled

with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." Paul recognized the truth long before it was spoken, that knowledge is power.

And the knowledge that leads to the greatest power is the knowledge of God, the greatest knowledge that we can have, and no greater knowledge than that. Adolphe Monod made an insightful statement when he observed that "Philosophy taking man for its center says know thyself; only the inspired word which proceeds from God has been able to say know God." Monod was a very influential French preacher of the 19th century, who was involved in an evangelical revival among the Protestant churches of France and Switzerland, the Netherlands and England. It was a movement called The Awakening. And it was a reaction to the materialism and the rationalism of that day, which had also affected the church.

And so this movement was a return to the doctrines of the reformed faith. Especially biblical authority, the sovereignty of God, the lost condition of man, justification by faith in Christ, and the necessity of personal conversion. Now, that's an important point to note because in the church of Christ people grow up. Maybe they're born to Christian parents and they grow up within these churches and they hear the Word of God. And they come to an intellectual knowledge of some things and they know the answers, but they haven't truly experienced a personal conversion.

They have not personally recognized that they are a sinner in need of a Savior and that they must lay hold of that Savior through faith. And so they emphasize the necessity of personal conversion. They recognize the necessity of all of these great doctrines of the faith, that we must know God. Others involved in the movement were Robert Haldane, who's a Scottish evangelist and writer, a man who you may be familiar with. He's written a classic commentary on the book of Romans.

But he and Monod and others understood the necessity of the knowledge of God, and that knowledge, rightly received, leads to

spiritual blessing. That was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, the knowledge of God, knowing God, knowing Him personally. That's the essence of the Christian life. It's not ceremonies. It's not doing things.

All of that fits within the Christian faith. Don't misunderstand me. We have ceremonies on Sunday night; celebrate the Lord's Supper and we have baptisms. We work, seek to do good works. Paul, who says we're not saved by works, will go on to point out in chapter 2 in verse 10, that we have works, though, and we must perform them.

That's the evidence; that's the outworking of the faith. But, essentially, that's not the Christian life. The Christian life is knowing God. It's a relationship with God. That is eternal life.

As a matter of fact, it's the way our Lord defines eternal life in his high priestly prayer in John 17 in verse 3. He says "This is eternal life, that they may know these." So in the Bible, knowledge is not only intellectual. It is also personal. And the knowledge of God brings those two together. The knowledge of experience with the knowledge of understanding.

The word that is used here for knowledge is the Greek word, *epignósis*. If you've heard enough sermons, you've heard people quote that word. It's a very important word in Greek for knowledge. And, really, it's two words. It's the word, *epi*, and the word, *gnósis*.

*Epi* is a preposition and *gnosis* is a simple word for knowledge. The Greeks were very fond of compound words, and they liked to put prepositions with their nouns. And the purpose of that was to intensify the word. So that's what this is. It's an intensive form of the word, "knowledge," and it speaks of deep knowledge, full knowledge.

It's not superficial knowledge that he's speaking of here, but it is real knowledge. Now, according to Paul, that's the great need of the church. Not "know thyself," but "know God." And that's the key to the spiritual life, the key to the Christian life. In fact, as you come to know God, know about Him, and in knowing about Him, come to know

Him more deeply and personally, then you will come to know yourself, and you won't like what you see.

But the good news is that as we come to know Him and walk with Him, He changes us, He transforms us. He was transforming the Ephesians, and they were becoming known for their faith and their love. Now, it's the knowledge, it's knowing Him that is to be paramount in our mind, in our desire, to know God. That was not only Paul's ambition for the Ephesians, but that was his ambition for himself. We see that in Philippians chapter 3 in verse 10.

I often quote that passage, I know, but it's so applicable. And there he says, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings." And you'll notice in that statement that he makes, knowledge precedes power. "That I might know Him and the power of His resurrection." And that knowledge that leads to power comes by study but also by illumination.

It is a gift of the Holy Spirit that He imparts to us as we read and contemplate the Scriptures. It does not come, generally, apart from the study of Scripture. It is through the study of Scripture that we come to know. And coming to know God and know the things of God is ultimately a gift of God. That's what Paul teaches, I think. in the fact that he's praying for it.

But he teaches it in other passages of Scripture. In 1 Corinthians chapter 2, he writes in verse 10 and 11: The Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God, the thoughts of God. No one knows except the Spirit of God. Only the Spirit of God knows what the Father is thinking. Can't know that apart from knowing the Spirit of God.

He knows it and He transfers it to us. That's what Paul says. He goes on in verses 13 and 14, and writes that spiritual things are "taught by the Spirit," and explains that the natural man can never understand these things. They're spiritually appraised. We must be taught them by God. He must give them to us.

So understanding of spiritual things, the knowledge of God, that comes from the Spirit. And that's what Paul is saying here. That's why he's praying that God would give to the Ephesians "a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him." There's some question as to the meaning of the word, "Spirit," here. Is it a human spirit, as the New American Standard Bible indicates with that lower-case "s?" Or is it the Holy Spirit as the New international Version indicates with a capital "S."

And it's not an easy question to settle. But probably this is a reference to the Holy Spirit. I use the New American Standard Bible, but I'm going to disagree with the editors here and their interpretation of that word, "spirit," because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of revelation. The Holy Spirit is the source of revelation. Revelation doesn't find its source in the human spirit.

This is from the Spirit of God. Now, that doesn't imply that they had not received the Holy Spirit. He's not praying that they would come to receive the Holy Spirit. He's made it very clear in verse 13 that they have the Holy Spirit. He says that they have been "sealed with the Holy Spirit."

His prayer here is for a special manifestation of the Spirit, that the Spirit would impart revelation, impart knowledge and wisdom to them. And the way that the Spirit does that is explained in verse 18, where Paul writes: "I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened." He prays that we will be able to understand and believe the truth that is taught in the Word of God, that that spiritual insight be given to our heart. And we often speak of the heart in terms of emotion. That's very common.

When we think of the heart, we think of someone who feels deeply about something. And yet, in the Bible, the heart is much broader than that. It speaks of the inner man. It speaks of our ability to think and to feel, and to make decisions. It is the seat of intelligence and the will and the emotions.

It refers to the mental faculties that we have. Perhaps we could simply refer to the heart as the mind. And the Holy Spirit so works upon the mind that we are able to understand truth that formerly we were not able to understand. It's as though He turned the light on in our minds. He opens the eyes of our heart, gives spiritual insight into truth that we've never seen before, or truth that was missed by us.

It was there, but we just didn't see it. You've probably experienced that. You've read through the Bible or you've read a particular passage a number of time and then, suddenly, you see something that you've never seen before. You're surprised, surprised you never saw it before. It really has an impact upon you.

It's a point that has special meaning. Well, that's the Spirit of God opening up the eyes of our heart, giving us an understanding of things that we didn't understand before or perhaps we didn't see; we missed. He puts a spotlight on it, so to speak, and enables us to see what has always been there but we had missed. There's a good illustration of that from the Old Testament in the life of Elisha in 2 Kings chapter 6.

There was war between Syria and Israel. And the King of Syria was very frustrated, because all of his military plans were being spoiled because someone was revealing them to the King of Israel. Before he'd carry it out the King had been tipped off and he wasn't able to carry out his military plan. Well, he thought he had a traitor in his camp, and he expressed his anger over that, until he was informed that it wasn't anyone in their camp. It was in Israel that the person lived who was revealing these things.

It was the prophet Elisha. In fact the person who told the King that – "He tells the King of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom." The things that you think, he knows about. The things that you say in the most private part of your home, he knows, and he reveals that. So when the king learned that Elisha was the culprit and that he was in the city of Dothan, he sent an army there to capture him.

And the text says that he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city. The next morning Elisha's servant arose and he goes outside and he saw this enemy surrounding the city. And he panicked and he ran back to Elisha. "And he said, 'Alas, my master! What shall we do?

"And Elisha very calmly said, 'Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.' And that must have seen like a rather foolish statement to that servant, because he looked out and he saw this vast army of chariots and armed men. And he saw Elisha and himself and maybe some simple people in the town there. And he couldn't see how in the world there were more with them than with the enemy. And then Elisha prayed, 'O Lord, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.'

"And the Lord opened the servant's eyes and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha." They were there all along, and Elisha saw them and wasn't afraid. But the servant didn't see them. In fact, he couldn't see them until the Lord opened his eyes miraculously.

Well, Paul was praying for the same miracle to occur with the Ephesians, for all of us; that our eyes be opened or enlightened to the truth that God has revealed but has not been understood. There is much to learn and much to know that will be a great blessing to us that we haven't yet learned or haven't yet come to know. Paul wants them to learn these things. And he had three things in particular that we need to realize. And the first one is our hope, the second is our riches, and then the third is our power.

First, Paul wants us to have a better understanding of "the hope of His calling," meaning the hope to which God has called us. Now, that takes us back to the beginning of our Christian experience with God's effectual call. It takes us back again to grace, Paul's favorite theme, which he picks up again here. This is not our call to God. This is God's call to us, the call to which we responded in faith.

Not a call that we heard. It's a call that is inaudible, one that the Spirit of God speaks to our heart, and we respond to it in faith. It's what Peter refers to 1 Peter chapter 2 in verse 9, when he writes that God "has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light." God called us and we responded. In fact, we wouldn't have responded had He not called us.

And He called us to hope. Not hope in the sense of a wish for something better or hope in the sense of "Well, I hope so." But for the Christian, hope is certain. It's the hope of certainty. It is grounded in our eternal election.

That's the connection that he makes with this statement about "the hope of His calling." Our hope is not tied to the circumstances. Circumstances are constantly shifting, changing, and they may change to our disadvantage. And we wonder what kind of hope do we have in that kind of a circumstance. And if all we were, if our hope was based upon the circumstances in which we live, we really have no hope.

We have no ground for hope. But our hope is not tied to that, as it's tied to God's eternal decree. And so because of that our hope is certain. Paul's prayer is that we take hold of our hope, that we understand it, that we believe it, that we live in it, that we live with confidence in it. It's a hope that ends despair.

John writes something about this hope. At least he describes it for us in 1 John 3:2, where he writes: "Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be." In other words, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you're a child of God. Now, you may puzzle over that and guess what's in John's mind. We look at ourselves, and is this what it is to be a child of God?

I don't look any better than most people in the world. In fact, I don't look as good as many of them. And I'm not doing as well, financially, as many of them, or in terms of my health. Well, John says, if you're a believer in Jesus Christ, you are a child of God, but "it has not appeared what we shall be." This isn't what we're going to be.

So he says, in effect, don't get discouraged with your present condition. He then continues. "We know that when He appears – " when our Lord appears – "we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is." In other words, there's a change that's coming. And when Jesus Christ returns and we make eye contact with Him and we see Him, we will be transformed into something glorious.

Now, that change is coming and that's our hope. And that's what we are to know with certainty is coming, and we're to live in light of that. Not live for the moment, the things that pass away, but for what is coming. Well, secondly, Paul wants us to realize our riches, "what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints."

Not our inheritance in Him – though we have a great inheritance in Christ – but God's inheritance in us; that is in the saints. We are His inheritance. And we covered this somewhat last week. But this takes us back to the thought that he developed in verses 11 and 14, where we are said to be God's inheritance, His possession. It's a reminder of God's great love for us, love that never fails.

Love that was set upon us when we were lost, when we were children of wrath, when we were sons of disobedience. And yet, he chose us in spite of that. It shows his infinite love. And we look forward to that future glorification. Because, as His inheritance, we're going to be transformed in something glorious.

And third, Paul wants us to know our power, verse 19. "And what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe." The power of God is working for us and it is working in us. And so God called us in the past, Paul has pointed out, and has made us His inheritance for the future. But in the meantime, in the present, God has not left us to our own devices.

He has supplied us with power, the surpassing power of His greatness; power that is so great it goes – you can't describe it all. It's surpassing. The word power is the Greek word, "*dunamis*." And we are somewhat familiar with in words that we get from that Greek

word, such as dynamite, dynamo, dynamic. And that gives us a sense of the power that he's speaking of.

But the power that Paul is referring to is far greater than anything those words might suggest. It's a word that the author of Hebrew uses in Hebrews 1:3 to describe Christ as the one who "upholds all things by the word of His power." The word, "upholds," is a very common word. It's a word for carrying. And so He isn't upholding all things in a static way.

He's not just holding them and holding them together. He's carrying them along. That's the sense of this. He's carrying the universe to its predestined end and purpose. He does that by His power.

So the power that is for us is the power that makes and moves history. That's great power. But Paul's not satisfied with this. And then to stress the surpassing greatness of His power that is for us, Paul sort of piles up synonyms or words for power. He says of His power, that it is according to the "working," the *energeia*, the energy of His – "of the strength of His might."

All of that: the power, the energy, the strength of God is for us who believe in the greatness of the power. It's really brought out in verse 20, where he states that the standard or the measure of His power is the resurrection. It's the power that raised Christ from the dead. That's the power that is working in us, resurrection power, the power that overcomes death, the power that changes us from children of wrath to children of God. The power that overcomes sin and enables us to live lives of victory.

Now, Paul wants us to know that we have these things; that they are in Christ. And we who believe in Christ are in Him; therefore, we have them in Christ. They are our present possession. When Heinrich Schliemann discovered the treasures of Troy, he was about to give up on the whole project. He worked long and hard on it and he hadn't come to discover the things he'd wanted to discover.

About to give up on it when a pickaxe put a hole in a wall and he caught a glimpse of gold. And he was surrounded by his workers. He wasn't alone when he saw that, but no one else saw what he saw. They were there, but they didn't see it. And so he knew that and he quickly gave everyone a holiday.

And while they were gone, he and his wife gathered in these vast treasures of gold. Now the others were there, but they didn't get the gold because they didn't see the treasures. They were unaware of them. He did and he gained them. And maybe we can learn a lesson for that, and that is we miss riches when we don't see them.

And we will enjoy our riches in Christ as we come to know them. And so we need the knowledge that Paul speaks of here. We need the knowledge of these riches and these blessings that are ours. And we need the wisdom and the obedience to appropriate them, and we need the faith to live in them. We have all of that.

We simply need to call upon it and seek it from our Lord. And the more we know Him; the more we know Christ, the more we have of the knowledge of God – both the knowledge of experience and the knowledge of understanding, the knowledge of doctrine – the more we will know and enjoy the riches that we have in Christ. As we know Him, we will know and enjoy them. That was Paul's prayer for the Ephesians, for the whole church of Jesus Christ. It should be our prayer for ourselves and our prayer for one another, that the eyes of our heart "may be enlightened" to what we have as Christians, every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places.

May God help us to know these things and may He give us a desire to learn them. It's one thing to speak about this; it's one thing to hear about it. It's quite another thing to desire it. But this is the kind of blessing, a blessing that we actually have that changes lives, puts lives back together, puts marriages back together, puts homes back together. It's so important.

It's what Paul desired of the people of Ephesus and desired for us. And so we should desire it too. We pray that God gives us that

desire, that hunger for His Word and the desire to live in light of it. That's the power that truly changes lives. And the power to do that, the power to live triumphantly is only what we have in Christ.

And the only way to be in Christ and to have these things is to believe in Christ, to recognize that you are a sinner in need of a Savior. And so if you're here this morning and you've not believed in Jesus Christ, recognize that you are a sinner, that you are deserving of the wrath of God, But God in His grace has made provision. He's made provision for the sinner, and it's the death of His Son. He is the way of escape.

He is the door into eternal life. And if you simply trust in Him, recognize that you're a sinner, trust in the only one who can save, Jesus Christ, you will come to know the forgiveness of all your sins and life everlasting and the blessings of this present eternal life that we experience. May God help you to do that, to look to Him. May he help each of us come to know better what we have in Christ. Shall we stand now for the benediction.

[Prayer] Gracious God and heavenly Father, we do thank you for the many blessings that you have given to us. So many, we haven't begun to comprehend them. And that's not discouraging. That's greatly encouraging, as there's far more than we could ever possibly enjoy in this brief life that you've given to us. And we will spend all eternity **learning of** the fullness of the blessings that are ours in the heavenly places.

But, Father, we pray that you would move us to seek to know them to the best of our ability now and live in light of what we are, what we have, live in the power that is ours through the Holy Spirit. May we come to know you, desire to know you and walk with you. I pray, Father, that you'd perform this miracle within each of us. Give us a desire to know Christ, know him better. And if there be any in attendance this morning, Father, who have not experienced personal conversion, have not trusted in Christ, give them no rest or peace until

they come to know Him, whom to know as life eternal. It's in His name we pray. Amen.