

Ephesians Chapter 1

The chapter we are about to consider is perhaps the highest ministry in the whole of the New Testament. It reveals to us God's great eternal purpose for us through Christ. One must ask the question why it was that Paul chose to convey this truth to the Ephesians and not to any other church, for example the Corinthians, the Galatians, or the Romans. I suppose there was a right time to reveal these truths, especially the setting aside of the peculiar place of Israel. In the early days of the church, God was still making an appeal to Israel nationally through the gospel. It is not till the nation has rejected the Lord Jesus finally, that Paul says in Acts 28:28, "The salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles". There also had to be the right company to whom the truth of the mystery could be made known. I believe Paul knew this truth for many years before writing Ephesians. In Romans 16:25 for example, he refers to the "revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began". But he mentions it only in the passing and says no more. I believe there is more than a passing reference to it in Galatians 2:2 – "I went up by revelation and communicated unto them that gospel which I preach among the Gentiles". Paul also wrote in I Cor 13 about "when that which is perfect is come". This I believe is the mystery, God's last revelation about His church.

Thus Paul had the knowledge of the mystery for many years, but had to wait for the right audience to reveal it to. He could not reveal it to the Corinthians because of their low moral and spiritual state, as he says in I Cor 3:2, "I have fed you with milk, and not with meat, for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able. For ye are yet carnal." The same was also true of the Hebrews – "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God". (Hebrews 5:12).

It is not therefore without significance that Paul has nothing to rebuke or correct the Ephesians for. There were no moral or doctrinal errors which he first had to sort out before conveying doctrinal truth. Hence in verses 15 and 16 of chapter 1, he writes of the Ephesians, "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". I believe it was this faith and love that caused Paul to reveal these great truths at this particular time. Paul is able to convey to them the highest ministry we have in the whole of our bible. But am I exaggerating when I describe Ephesians as the highest truth. In chapter 3, Paul delineates the various ways in which God made known the mystery. God used not one means only, or two, or three, or four even. He uses no less than five different ways to reveal this truth - by revelation, by reading, by the Spirit, by preaching, and by the church itself. If it is so important to God, it ought to be important to us.

Chapter 1 can readily be divided into three portions, and Paul himself gives us the heading for each section in his prayer in verses 18 and 19. The apostle therefore desires them to know three things :-

0. The hope of His calling
1. The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints
2. The exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe

We find the "hope of His calling" from verses 3 to 8, "His inheritance" from verses 9 to 14, and "the exceeding greatness of His power" from verse 19 to the end. When we look first of all at verse 3, we see how that Paul immediately bursts forth into praise towards God. No doubt there is going through his mind as he picks up his pen all the

things he is about to reveal to us, and so he cannot help but bless "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ". Israel knew Jehovah as their God, but Christianity goes further. We know Him as God and Father. The Lord introduced us to this new relationship when He said to Mary Magdalene on that resurrection morning, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father: to my God and to your God". The idea of Father brings in the thought of a family with all the feelings of love and affection which that entails. Israel knew little if anything of God as a Father. Hosea chapter 11:1 perhaps comes closest. "When Israel was a child then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt". What Israel was nationally, we are as individuals – we are the sons of God.

Let us look in turn at some of the expressions in this verse. The first thing we notice is that all our blessings are spiritual ones. I believe that our spiritual blessings are the very things listed in this chapter – chosen in Him before the foundation of the world, predestinated to the position of sons, redeemed, forgiven etc. Our blessings therefore stand in sharp contrast with those of the nation of Israel, for their blessings were material and conditional. Israel's ultimate aim was to fully inherit the blessings of the land. Once there, their blessings were conditional upon their obedience to the Lord. If thou wilt...then I will send the former and the latter rain, and the heaven shall bring forth her fruit etc". Israel's unfaithfulness even saw them lose the land completely during their 70 year long captivity in Babylon. If Israel's blessings were upon earth, then ours are "in the heavenlies" ie they are not of this world at all. The security of our blessings is surely seen in the expression "in Christ". It is an expression that occurs constantly throughout this epistle eg in chapter 1, it is found in verses 10,12, and 20.

Verse 4 underlines the fact that it is God's sovereign will alone that blesses us. We read that He has blessed us "according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world". When God chose us, did we have anything to do with it? Was it because of our moral condition? Of course not! God made His choice and He did it from His own sovereign will. It is thus that He has blessed us – unconditionally, without any regard to our state. Indeed if we look ahead to the first few verses of chapter 2, we will learn that we were once "dead in trespasses and in sins" and that God showed His mercy to us "even when we were dead in sins". Thus God gives us the blessings and they cannot be withdrawn from us, nor forfeited by us because of our current condition. It is true of course that we may have little or no appreciation of our blessings, but that is our fault alone, and not God's. The blessings are ours nonetheless, though we might not even be aware that they exist.

Election is surely brought in here as a secondary issue, but it is one of the most emphatic proofs of election in our bible. Too often we try to water down the truth of election. Some would say, "God chose us because He knew that one day, we would believe". That is not divine election, that is God being asked to rubber stamp, albeit prospectively, our own decision. Rather the bible shows that election is an absolute and sovereign choice made by God. Thus in Malachi 1:2 and 3, God asks Israel, "Was not Esau Jacob's brother?...Yet I loved Jacob and I hated Esau". Paul uses this same scripture, when arguing his case for election in Romans 9:11-13. "For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of Him that calleth, it was said unto her, "The elder shall serve the younger", as it is written, "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated"". It had nothing to do with Esau's subsequent behaviour – God made His choice before the children were born.

Some have difficulty in reconciling the truth of election with the preaching of the gospel to the "whosoever will". Yet the Acts of the apostles is one of the most "evangelical" books in the bible and still contains various references to the truth of

election. Thus after Paul and Barnabus had preached at Antioch in Pisidia, we read, "As many as were ordained to eternal life believed" (Acts 13:48). Election never deterred Paul from preaching. In Acts 18, when Paul was at Corinth, he received this word from the Lord, "I have much people in this city (verse 11)". "And he continued there a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them". Thus Paul was assured that God had His elect in the city, and Paul was then used by God to call them out through the preaching of the gospel. "It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe".

The expression "before the foundation of the world" is worthy of some comment. There are two Greek words used in the New Testament for our English word "foundation". The one used here in Ephesians 1:4 is KATABOLE, and the other used elsewhere is THEMELION. The latter is the word used for the foundation of a city. For example, Abraham "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God". The word is also used for the foundation of a house eg the wise man built the foundation of his house upon the rock, the foolish man built upon the sand (Luke 6:48). It is also used of the foundation of a temple, and of a wall. The word themelion is that which has been carefully prepared and carefully laid. It is used again to describe the work of God in creation. "Thou Lord in the beginning hath laid the foundation of the earth" (Hebrews chapter 1:10). It is used in Ephesians 2:20 of the church – "Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets"

Here however in Eph 1:4, it is the word katabole that is used in the expression "before the foundation of the world". This word is entirely different in meaning from themelion which suggests something that has been carefully laid. Katabole comes from two words, KATA which means "down" and BOLE which comes from the verb BALLO meaning to cast or to throw. KATABALLO which is the verb form of KATABOLE occurs twice in the New Testament.

In II Cor 4:9, Paul is speaking of the great hardships which he has endured when he writes, "Persecuted but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed".

In Revelation 12:10, we read of the casting down of Satan out of heaven. "The accuser of our brethren is cast down".

These two Greek words therefore describe very different ideas. Themelion is a carefully laid foundation whereas Katabole is something which is cast down. Hence in verse 4 of Eph 1, we can well translate our phrase as "before the casting down (or the overthrow) of the world". This is a strange word to use concerning a foundation. Why then is there such a difference in meaning between these two Greek words? Well I believe that in Hebrews 1, for example, we have the original creation as God first brought it into being, while Eph 1:4 refers to the overthrow of God's creation as described in Gen 1:2. "And the earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep". This describes a state of disorder or chaos ie an imperfect state, and surely not how God originally created the universe.

You are probably thinking by now that I am putting forward here what is commonly referred to as "the gap theory" ie that there is a gap of perhaps millions of years between Gen 1:1 and Gen 1:2. Well I do subscribe to this idea, only I would prefer it not be called a "theory". A theory is only someone's idea of what he considers to be the truth. It may be right, until proved otherwise, but here we are dealing with the bible, the word of God, and this leaves no room for theories. We need to establish our doctrine upon fact. How then do I know that Gen 1:1 is different from Gen 1:2? Well I know it because of a verse in Isaiah 45, verse 18. "He created it not a waste, He formed it to be inhabited". God therefore did not create a waste. This word "waste" is the Hebrew word TOHU. We find this word in Gen 1:2. "The earth was without form and void" – literally TOHU and BOHU. God did not make it TOHU according to Isaiah

45:18, but Gen 1:2 describes a state of TOHU. Gen 1:2 therefore does not describe the original creation of God. We have therefore established that something must have happened to the original creation to bring it into this state of chaos. The bible does not tell us what, but I can only make the assumption that it had something to do with the fall of Lucifer, better known to us the devil. In Ezekiel chapter 28, God speaks about the devil being cast out and also being cast down. After his heart was lifted up with pride, he was thrown out of heaven and therefore I believe he brought the creation into ruin. In a very different context, speaking of the assembly, Paul told the Corinthians that "God is not the author of confusion". It is hard to accept that God made the heavens and the earth then had to re-fashion it to make it habitable for man. Again, the verse in Isaiah says that He formed it to be inhabited. One final word about Genesis 1. We read in verse 2 of chapter 1 that "the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters". The Spirit in the New Testament is seen working in the sphere of re-generation and not creation, so again the Spirit's work in Genesis 1 would point to a work of restoration.

All this gives us a beautiful thought as to God's choice of us – we were chosen even before the fall of Lucifer. We were not part of God's emergency plan brought in as a result of the entrance of sin. In I Peter, we read there of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. The plan of God in salvation was made in eternity, before Adam sinned and before Lucifer sinned. We cannot explain it or even understand it, but this is what the word of God would be telling us. God's eternal desire was to have us as a people for Himself.

The place of the church is even more beautiful when we contrast it with that of Israel. Thus the church is said to be chosen **before** the foundation of the world, whereas Israel is chosen **from** the foundation of the world. We see the evidence of this in Matthew 25. There the Lord is judging the nations. He says to the sheep on His right hand, "come ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world". The Gentile nations will be brought in to share the blessings of the kingdom to be given to Israel, so Israel's blessings are also prepared from the foundation of the world. Israel's history may have begun more than a thousand years before the church, but the church was first in the mind of God. We see other distinctions in the word of God. When the Lord comes for Israel, He shall send His angels to gather His elect from the four corners of the earth, but when He comes for His church, we read "I will come again and receive you unto myself". "The Lord Himself" will come for us – He will not leave it to angels to gather us.

Notice now in verse 4 the reason is given as to why we have been chosen – that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love. God's intention therefore was not only to have a people for Himself, but to have a people who will be just like His Son – holy and without blame. "Without blame" is the translation of the Greek word AMOMOS. It is used twice of our Lord Jesus.

Hebrews 9:14 "Christ....who offered Himself without spot to God"

I Peter 1:19 "Not redeemed with corruptible things....but with the precious blood of Christ as of a Lamb *without blemish* and without spot".

What is intrinsically true of Him will one day be true of us when we get to heaven, but should it not also be true in measure of us today, while we are still here on earth.

Next in verse 4 we have the little phrase "before Him". This is one of the few verses in the whole bible which suggest that we will see God one day in heaven. It is often said by brethren that we shall never look upon the face of God the Father in heaven, even in eternity, but will only see God in the person of His Son. This would seem to be what John was saying in John 1:18 which says, "No man hath seen God at any time". Is this verse not true as it stands? But what does it say? No one has seen God **at any time**.

Does not this last phrase qualify the statement. What if we were outside of time ie in eternity, out of the body, or even in a vision. Could we perhaps see God then?

Let us look at various facts on both sides of the argument.

1.1. God is spirit (John chapter 4)

Does this mean therefore that God is invisible. Well, in Heb 1, we read there of angels who are ministering spirits, and the Bible is full of angelic appearances when they were seen by men.

1.2. The invisible God (Colossians chapter 1)

Col 1 says that Christ is the "image of the invisible God". So is this not conclusive? God is invisible. Well we look at the Greek word for invisible and discover that it is simply the opposite of the word "seen" ie the unseen God. Christ is the image, not of a God who cannot be seen, but of a God who is unseen.

1.3. The form of God

Does God have a body that we can see ? In Matt 18, we learn of the angels that they do always behold the face of the Father who is in heaven . In Rev 5, John sees a book in the right hand of Him who sat upon the throne. Moses saw His back in the cleft of the rock. So, God has a body just like us, and this shouldn't surprise us for we are made in the image and likeness of God. (Gen 1:26)

1.4. Sightings of God

There are a number of times when men were able to look upon God, though it was not in the flesh but in visions ie not in the realm of time.

In Rev 4 and 5, John looks and sees Him who sat upon the throne and speaks of Him in both chapters. In Daniel Ch 7, the prophet sees the Ancient of Days sitting upon His throne as the Lord, the Son of Man, approaches Him. Job, too, no less than 3 times over speaks of his great hope that one day he would see God – "yet in my flesh shall I see God". "Whom I shall see for myself....mine eyes shall behold Him and not another".

1.5. Our nearness to God

In Luke Ch 1, Gabriel says of himself "I am Gabriel that stand in the presence of God". Gabriel is one of the very few angels named in the Bible. He appears on 3 special occasions. To announce to Daniel the great prophecy of the 70 weeks, to announce to Zacharias the birth of John the Baptist, then to announce to Mary the birth of the Lord Jesus. Gabriel uses a Greek word ENOPION to describe his position - in the presence of God. But in Eph 1:4, Paul says of us Christians that we are before Him in love. Before is KATENOPION which means "hard up against" or "in His immediate presence." We are nearer to God today than even the highest angels in heaven. What we are positionally today, we shall be in reality in a day to come. The preposition KATENOPION is used only three times in the New Testament – in Ephesians 1, in Colossians 1:22, and in the final occurrence in Jude 24. In Colossians 1:22 we read, "to present you holy and unblameable and unreprougeable in **His sight**. In Jude 24 we also read, "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". It is thus only ever used of the church, and defines the nearness of the church to God today.

Gabriel could boast of being one who **stood** in the presence of God. But we are said to be **seated** in heavenly places. Gabriel stands as a courtier in the presence of the

great King, but we are seated in the King's presence as those who are His Sons. Thus in summary, Eph 1:4 is telling us that we are nearer to God than Israel and even nearer than the highest angels in heaven.

Verse 5 now introduces us to the word "predestination". This is a different idea from that of election. Election has to do with people, but predestination has to do with the place or the position that the people are going to. "Chosen in Him before the foundation of the world" is election, but in verse 5 we are predestined to the position of sons and in Ephesians 1:11, we are predestined to our inheritance. There is also an end in view in Romans 8:29. "He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren".

Verse 5 therefore takes us one step further in the purpose of God. He has predestinated us unto the position of sons. This is a new and higher thought than that of verse 4. God was not obliged to make us His sons – He could have saved us and cleansed us and made us His servants. As the prodigal made his way back to the Father in Luke 15, he was saying to himself, "I will arise and say to my father... "Make me as one of thy hired servants"". But when he reached the house, the Father announced to one and all, "This my son was dead and is alive, was lost and is found". So in Eph 1:5, why did God make us His sons – He did it according to the good pleasure of His will. Here is something that brings great delight to the heart of God – to have us as part of the family. Christianity is not a cold, heartless affair without any feelings. We know God as our Father today. He wants to show us His love, to reveal the secrets of His heart to us. That is why our verse ends with "before Him **in love**". Love is the driving force of the purpose of God for us.

Verse 6 gives us the end result of God's action – it is "to the praise of the glory of His grace". If the Queen brought a poor child into the palace, fed him and clothed him and sent him back home again, we might describe that as the "riches of her grace". But if the Queen went even further and took that child into her home and called him her son, that would be "the glory of her grace". How would men outside of the palace react to this news? It would be "to the praise of the glory of His grace". The apostle continues, "Wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved". The word "accepted" only occurs in one other place in the New Testament, and that is in Luke 1:28. Gabriel says to Mary, "Hail, thou that art **highly favoured**, the Lord is with thee". If Mary was highly favoured, then so also are we. Notice the feelings expressed in this verse – we are highly favoured in the **Beloved**. The verse could easily have ended with the words "in Christ" or "in Jesus" etc, but here we have an indication of what it cost God to redeem us – He gave us His beloved, the darling of His bosom.

Now at last in verse 7, there appears the first mention of redemption and of the forgiveness of sins. We no doubt would have started here and gone on to speak of our other blessings. But God shows us our high calling and position first, before calling us back to redemption. This was done "according to the riches of His grace".

But grace goes further than forgiveness. It is grace abounding in all wisdom and prudence. God has made known to us the mystery of His will. A mystery in scripture is not something which we can never fathom. A mystery in the bible is something which has hitherto been hidden but has now been revealed. God now reveals to us the mystery of His will – again He was under no obligation to do so, for it was according to His good pleasure. In Luke 10 we read of the joy of the Lord Jesus who rejoiced in that hour that the Father had revealed such things to babes. "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in spirit and said, I thank Thee Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so Father, for it was well pleasing in thy sight". It made God happy to reveal His ways to such as ourselves.

We find the substance of the mystery of His will in verse 10. "That in the dispensation of the fullness of times, He might gather together in one all things in Christ". We must make the distinction – is Paul here speaking about the millennium or about eternity? Well, there are a number of clues given to us.

The word for dispensation in this verse is *oikonomia* which means stewardship or administration. The word for example occurs three times in Luke 16, verses 2 to 4, in the parable of the unjust steward. The master sent for his steward and demands, "Give account of thy stewardship". That is, he was to give an account of how he had managed his master's affairs. The millennial kingdom is a period of administration or rule. "A king shall reign in righteousness". The following examples also show it to be period of rule or of administration :-

I Cor 6:2 "Know ye not that the saints shall judge the world"

I Cor 6:3 "Know ye not that we shall judge angels"

So when we think of the millennium, we think of rule but in eternity, righteousness shall dwell, as God dwells in the midst of His people.

The fullness of times suggests a period when all the ages shall reach their conclusion. The fullness of the Gentiles will have arrived. They will have reached the zenith of their power but it will come to an end when all things shall be gathered together in Him, that is Christ.

To gather together in one has the meaning of to comprehend, to gather together under the one head, to summarise. It comes from the Greek word *KEPHALE* which means "head". The start of the millennium will be a time of gathering. Matthew 24:31 says, "He shall send His angels and they shall gather together His elect (Israel)". The Lord will then be the true Judah, of whom it was prophesied, "Unto Him shall the gathering of the people be". Matthew 25:32 also speaks of the gathering of the nations, "Before Him shall be gathered all nations". We see the word used in Romans 13:9. "If there be any other commandment, it is briefly **comprehended** in this saying, namely, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself". This one commandment is the summation of the law. We asked the question, is this dispensation of the fullness of times the millennium or eternity? Well in I Corinthians 15, Paul does speak of the kingdom, and at the end of it, Christ will deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father, that "God may be all in all". In eternity, **God** is everything. In our verse 10 here, **Christ** is the head of everything. Christ is spoken of in Ephesians and Colossians as being head of the church, as being head of all principality and power, as being firstborn of all creation. He is these things today but in the millennium, all these things will be seen by all when all things are gathered under Him.

Now in verse 11, the word predestinated occurs once more. We saw it in verse 5 where it referred to sonship, now it refers to our inheritance in the kingdom of Christ. We can understand why it is that God would wish His Son to reign, for He is worthy of it. In Revelation chapter 5, He alone is worthy to take the book and to loosen its seven seals. He is worthy for two reasons – He is the Lion and He is the Lamb. As the Lion of the tribe of Judah, He has the legal right to the title deeds of earth. But as the Lamb freshly slain, He has the moral right to the kingdom, for He has purchased it in His own blood. But the wonder of wonders is that we are going to share that inheritance with Him. "If we suffer with Him, we shall also reign with Him." And why has God done this? It is "by the counsel of His own will". No one asked God to do such a thing. No one advised Him. "Who hath known the mind of the Lord or who hath been His counsellor". God did it just because He wanted to do so.

Now, in verses 12 and 13, Paul introduces the subject of the blessings in common to both Jew and Gentile. This is the great theme of the mystery, about to be unfolded in chapters 2 and 3. Our common blessings are centred in Christ. Thus in verse 12, Paul begins with the Jew and includes himself as part of the believing remnant of Israel

when he writes, "That we should be to the praise of His glory, who first trusted in Christ". The gospel, when it was first preached, began in Jerusalem, then Judaea, then Samaria, before it went out to the uttermost parts of the earth. But it was to the Jew first.

But then in verse 13, he goes on to include the Gentiles in this. He speaks thus of Christ, "in whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation". The expression "the word of truth" is most beautiful. There are many voices in the world today, but here is a message that can be relied upon for it is a word of truth, a dependable word. It is true because the One who is the subject of it said of Himself, "I am the way, the truth, the life." Grace and truth came by Him. The word of truth is further defined as "the gospel of your salvation".

Paul continues, "In whom also, having believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise". The idea of a seal is twofold – it is a mark of security, and it is also a mark of ownership. We cannot be lost for the Spirit of God has sealed us. We are part of the family of God, we have eternal life and shall never perish; we have divine hands holding ours. Now we have an added security – we are sealed by the Spirit of God. A seal also represents ownership. In Revelation 7:3, the 144,000 of the redeemed are sealed in their foreheads by the seal of the living God.

We are sealed here not just by one described as the Spirit but also by "the Spirit of promise, the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession". The word "earnest" means literally a deposit. The payment of a deposit is a promise to pay the full sum at some later date. God has given us a down payment of our inheritance, a guarantee that His promise will be fulfilled. The inheritance is surely that of verse 11, ie our place in the millennium kingdom, hence the purchased possession must also be that same kingdom. Some see in this verse the redemption of our bodies but we must constrain ourselves to the immediate context and that is the reign of Christ and our part in this reign. In Matthew 13:44 we read of how the Lord has purchased the world. "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field, which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field". The field is the world. Christ has purchased it, but one day He shall redeem it fully.

Is there a difference between buying and redeeming something? Well, consider what the bible has to say about our bodies. Paul says in I Cor 6:20, "Ye are bought with a price". Our bodies then have been purchased, but the redemption of our bodies is still future. Romans 8:23 says, "Even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body". That will only happen when Christ comes for us in the day of resurrection.

Another illustration of the difference between purchase and redemption is found in Jeremiah 32. The prophet is in prison when a relative comes and offers him a piece of ground for sale. Jeremiah buys it and calls upon men to witness the purchase transaction. But the prophet is in prison and the city is under siege from the Chaldeans. Thus he purchased a field, knowing that in his lifetime perhaps, he had little chance of redeeming it.

Now in verse 15, we come to the commencement of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. As stated previously, Paul chose his time and his audience to unveil the secret of the mystery. He had heard of their faith in the Lord Jesus, and their love to all the saints. The Ephesians then were a fit object for the apostle's ministry, but it is beautiful to see that, having revealed these things to them, the apostle now prays for them that they may be able to know and to fully grasp what has just been revealed. Note how Paul prays to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.

The title "God of our Lord Jesus Christ" suggests His holiness, His righteousness, His

power and His authority. Many of these traits are brought out in this chapter where we are dealing with the eternal purpose of God. In chapter 3, Paul will pray to the Father of the Lord Jesus, and there we will read of the family, of hearts, and of love.

In the expression "Father of glory", we are thinking of the Father as being the originator and source of glory. The devil for example, in John 8:44 is spoken of thus – "The devil is a liar and the Father of it". The devil is the originator and source of all lies. So likewise in Genesis 16:5, Abraham is promised that he will become the "father of many nations". Many nations would spring from him. The Father of glory is therefore speaking of the Father as the source of glory. He now wishes to share His glory, not only with His Son, but also with every child of God. God has an inheritance in His saints.

Paul continues in his prayer that God may give the Ephesians "the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him". There is a parallel here perhaps with Solomon in I Kings 3. The Lord appeared to him in a dream and makes the statement, "Ask what I shall give thee". He could have asked for long life, for riches, for honour, but instead he asks, "Give therefore to thy servant an understanding heart to judge the people". Solomon of course was famed for his wisdom and this brought the Queen of Sheba all the way from the south to hear him. How much though do we covet wisdom and understanding today? James says in chapter 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God that given to all men liberally, and upbraideth not: and it shall be given him".

The Christian already has a great deal in his favour as far as knowing the mind of God is concerned. Verse 18 adds, "The eyes of your understanding having been enlightened". We all have the potential to fully learn the ways of God, especially compared with the unsaved man. In I Corinthians 2:9,10 we read,

"Eye hath not seen, Nor ear heard, Neither hath entered into the heart of man, The things which God hath prepared for them that love Him.

But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit : for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea the deep things of God".

Unlike the unconverted, we have dwelling within each one of us the Spirit of truth, whose task it is to reveal divine truth to us. This contrast between believers and unbelievers is brought out again in Matthew 13:11 where the Lord says to the disciples, "It is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given". We see this also in Luke 10, "Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes".

There are these three things that Paul wants them to know in his prayer, as discussed previously (see page 1). Notice it is not our calling but **His** calling, not our inheritance but **His** inheritance. We of course receive the blessings but it is really here what God gets out of these things. The hope of God's calling is to fill the heavens with a people for Himself, like Himself, and near Himself: not servants merely but sons, redeemed and forgiven. This is the fulfilment of all God's purposes in the past.

His inheritance in the saints is what God will get when the Lord Jesus will at last rule in righteousness over the whole earth. But He will not take up His inheritance apart from the saints, hence here it is "in the saints".

And how beautiful to learn that the power available to us is that same power that God used when He took Christ from among the dead and seated Him in the very highest pinnacle of glory. Notice though the distinction between what is said of Him and what is said of us in chapter 2. We being once dead in trespasses and sins need to be quickened, but this not true of Him. We are seated in the heavenlies, but of Him alone it is added, "at His own right hand".

Finally in verses 22 and 23, we learn the unique place of Christ in relation to the Church. We thus learn that God gave His Son a second time. In John 3:16 we learn, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son". That was in weakness upon the cross, and it was to the world. But when God gave His Son to the church, He waited until He was at His own right hand, as head over all things. The words "to be" in the phrase "to be the head over all things" are not found in the original Greek. God did not give His Son to be or to become Head over all things. God gave Him to the Church and He did so when He was head over all things. The One whom God has given us knows no peer or no equal.

The last phrase in this chapter is about the church of which it is said, "Which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all". The head is in heaven and the body is on earth. Neither is complete without the other. The church is His fullness or complement. Fullness is the translation of the Greek word PLEROMA. The best illustration of this word is found in Mark 2:21. "No man also seweth a piece of new cloth on an old garment: else the new piece that filleth it up taketh away from the old, and the rent is made worse". The pleroma is that which fills up the rent in the garment. The word pleroma has also been used earlier in the chapter in verse 10 – "the dispensation of the fullness of times". It is the period of time when all the purposes of God will have their fulfilment – for the Jew, the Gentile, the Church, the creation. The last pieces of the jigsaw will be put into place.