

**Ephesians 1:15—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,**

When Paul says, “*For this reason,*” he is referencing all the blessings he has outlined in verses 3-14. These believers had been blessed “*with every spiritual blessing...in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:3), chosen in Christ (Ephesians 1:4), “*predestined...in the Beloved*” (Ephesians 1:5-6), redeemed and forgiven “*in Him*” (Ephesians 1:7), received in Him “*wisdom and insight*” to know God’s ultimate plan (Ephesians 1:8-10), made an inheritance “*in Him*” (Ephesians 1:10-11), and “*sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit*” (Ephesians 1:13-14). Paul, writing from prison in Rome, had heard of their “*faith in the Lord Jesus*” and their “*love for all the saints*” (Ephesians 1:15). But some time (around four years) had passed since he had seen them. This news of their obedience had to greatly encourage Paul, especially since he had instructed them in the ways of the Lord as early as his third missionary journey (Acts 19:8-10). “*Love*” in verse 15 is *agape*, meaning unconditional love, a “*fruit of the Spirit*” (Galatians 5:23). Thus, Paul’s readers loved God’s people unconditionally. Ephesians 1:15 also reconfirms that New Testament believers are “*saints*” who sometimes sin, not lowly sinners saved by grace.

To know that these saints walked in faith and loved one another unconditionally must have brought joy beyond measure to this seasoned missionary. Sadly, however, the apostle John, some years later, described these same believers as having “*left*” their “*first love*” (Revelation 2:1-5). Paul realized the need for the truths of Ephesians 1:3-14 to be transformed from intellectual stimulation to spiritual revelation. Therefore, he prayed for the church at Ephesus, the subject of Ephesians 1:16.

**Ephesians 1:16—do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers;**

In Colossians 1:9 Paul states:

*For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, 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, (Colossians 1:9)*

Paul was a man of prayer. No wonder he prayed for the believers at Ephesus (Ephesians 1:16)! They were people of “*faith*” (Ephesians 1:15)—individuals who applied what they believed. Because of their faithfulness, Paul gave thanks for them on a regular basis.

I can’t begin to express the encouragement I receive while thanking the Lord for the faithful. As I do so, I am privileged to remember how these individuals have impacted my life and the lives of countless others. If you aren’t in the habit of thankfully praying for the faithful, I highly recommend that you begin. In fact, you might bow right now and thank the Lord for those saints who have encouraged you in the faith. You might even mail them a letter. A friend of mine has a ministry in this area, and his hand-written notes I always read in full.

God honored Paul’s prayers, for the Ephesian church walked in faith and love while Paul interceded on their behalf. But something happened between the date of this epistle and John’s God-inspired writing of the book of Revelation. The church at Ephesus had “*left*” her “*first love*” (Revelation 2:4).

*Conclusion:* Regardless of the effectiveness of the teacher, or the depth of the subject matter, the student will not experience a sustained obedience unless the Holy Spirit is allowed to consistently transform information to revelation.

As a new believer, I had to learn that the “good feelings” experienced from studying God’s Word must

never be mistaken for spiritual growth, for I can experience an emotional “high” on information alone. Hence, information by itself never brings about change. Only revealed truth makes a difference in the lives of God’s people.

**Ephesians 1:17—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.**

This passage records Paul’s method of praying for the church at Ephesus. First, he mentions “*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory.*” Because “*the Father of glory*” is Jesus’ Father (also review Ephesians 1:3), Paul again confirms that Jesus is the Father’s Son through the “*virgin*” of Isaiah 7:14. The phrase, “*the Father of glory,*” also points to the Father’s flawless character, which results in manifested glory each time He reveals Himself. It also confirms His worthiness to receive the glory we ascribe to Him. (The manifestation of God’s glory throughout the Old and New Testaments is recorded in the following verses: Exodus 3:2-4; Exodus 19:16-18; Exodus 20:18-19; Exodus 40:34-38; 2Chronicles 5:13-14; 2Chronicles 7:2-3; Ezekiel 11:22-25; Luke 2:8-9; John 1:14; Acts 1:9-12; Acts 2:1-3; Colossians 1:27). Notice that Paul refers to Jesus as “*Lord*” for the second time in three verses (review verse 15).

Paul prayed that “*the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory*” would impart to these believers “*a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.*” Wuest writes in his commentary on Ephesians:

What Paul is praying for is that God might so work in the lives of the Ephesian saints that they will have the spiritual wisdom and a revelation from Him that is the result of the Holy Spirit’s work of energizing their human spirit. This spiritual wisdom and revelation is “in the knowledge of Him.”<sup>i</sup>

Paul basically states that the wisdom and revelation he desires for these believers is to be found in a deeper knowledge of God Himself. Paul’s approach makes sense, for his personal goal was not activity, but to know intimately the heart of Christ (Philippians 3:10). He understood well that to know the Son was to know the Father (John 14:9). He also realized that in knowing the Son, and falling deeply in love with Him, meant that his faith would always support the activity that God prescribed. In fact, Paul, in pursuing Christ’s heart above all else, learned to live by Christ’s very life (Colossians 3:4; Romans 5:10; Philippians 1:21).

“*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom*” (Proverbs 9:10), but God imparts additional wisdom as the believer progresses “*in the knowledge of Him*” (Ephesians 1:17). Thus, the “*fathers*” (the spiritually mature) of the faith possess enhanced wisdom due to knowing “*Him who has been from the beginning*” (1John 2:13-14). The principle of the cross is consistently manifested in their relationships, for they live for the benefit of others—never themselves. The Godhead receives much glory from such individuals.

Note that Paul writes “*a spirit of wisdom*” in Ephesians 1:17 rather than “the spirit of wisdom.” The lack of a definite article verifies that Paul is not referencing the Holy Spirit, although through the Holy Spirit this “*spirit of wisdom*” is received. Ray Stedman, in his commentary on Ephesians, writes:

So he is not praying that they will be given the Holy Spirit. He is praying for a special ministry of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Isaiah, the prophet speaks of the seven spirits of God—the spirit of wisdom, the spirit of understanding, the spirit of counsel, the spirit of knowledge, etc. (Isaiah 11:2). He doesn’t mean that there are seven Holy Spirits; he means that there is one Holy Spirit who has a seven-fold ministry of illuminating and enlightening the heart.<sup>ii</sup>

These believers already possessed “*everything pertaining to life and godliness*” (2Peter 1:3). Their problem was not a deficiency of provision but a lack of application. For this reason Paul prayed for “*wisdom*” and “*revelation*” on their behalf.

“*Wisdom*” and “*revelation*” are somewhat synonymous: “*revelation*”—the illumination of truth; “*wisdom*”—an understanding of how truth applies to God and His plan for man. We must never forget that “*wisdom*” and “*revelation*” are only attained through “*the knowledge of Him*”—through a deeper understanding of Who God is. No amount of Christian activity and busyness will result in an impartation of wisdom. Only time alone in His presence will suffice.

**Ephesians 1:18—I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,**

*I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, (1:18a)*

“*Heart*” is not referencing the physical pump that circulates blood throughout our bodies. “*Heart*” is from the Greek *kardia*, which is interpreted “*heart*” in a majority of cases in the New Testament. But *kardia* is rendered “*mind*” in passages such as Luke 1:66 and Acts 7:23, and “*minds*” in Luke 21:14. So the “*heart*” (Ephesians 1:18) is the believer’s innermost being—totally separate from anything physical.

Paul prayed that the “*eyes*” of these believer’s hearts would “*be enlightened.*” The phrase, “*may be enlightened,*” is a perfect participle in the Greek, pointing to past action, completed action, with a resulting state of being. Wuest, therefore, interprets the verse as follows: “*the eyes of your heart having been enlightened with the present result that they are in a state of illumination.*”<sup>iii</sup> Paul desired that the eyes of his readers’ hearts continually be enlightened (or illuminated). To discover what occurs when one’s eyes are “*enlightened,*” read Luke 24:13-35—which explains why Paul prayed as he did for these saints.

Paul desired that these believers’ eyes be opened in three specific areas, all of which are recorded in the remainder of this verse and the first phrase of verse 19.

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<sup>i</sup> Ibid.

<sup>ii</sup> Stedman, Ray C. (1972). *Turned On By Prayer* from the *Riches In Christ* series. <http://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/ephesians/turned-on-by-prayer>

<sup>iii</sup> Wuest, Kenneth S. (1983). *Ephesians and Colossians*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI. [www.eerdmans.com](http://www.eerdmans.com). Used by permission.