

6. What is the biblical meaning of “mystery”?
7. How would you summarize God’s master plan for the salvation of a lost world?
8. God has made us his heritage. What does this mean?
9. Does the seal of the Holy Spirit preserve us from falling away? What does it do?
10. Does the guarantee or “earnest” of the Spirit guarantee our faithfulness? What does it do?
11. Have you praised the glory of God for his spiritual blessings as often as for his material blessings?

Lesson Two (1:15-23)

Paul’s Prayer (1:15-23)

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead and made him sit at his right hand in the heavenly places, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come; 22 and he has put all things under his feet and has made him the head over all things for the

church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Some Christians are like the farmer who bought a tractor but did not know it ran under its own power. Each day he hooked his big team of horses to it and pulled it around the field. Finally he got tired of all the bother and quit using the tractor altogether. “Tractors are no good,” he concluded. He didn’t know what one was good for, and he didn’t know how to use its power.

Lest any Christian not know what Christianity is good for, or how to use its power, Paul writes the prayer which is the text of our lesson.

V. 15 For this reason—The reason that Paul makes this prayer for his readers is the thought of the preceding verses: God has blessed them spiritually and has sealed them with his own Spirit.

because I have heard of your faith—Why did Paul say he had “heard of” their faith if he had spent nearly three years with them in Ephesus? There are two probable answers. First, since some years had passed since his stay in Ephesus, Paul was rejoicing that he heard of their continuing faith (as in Philemon 4, 5 and 1 Thess. 3:6). Second, this epistle was apparently intended for *all* of Asia Minor and many of these believers were people Paul had never met. (See comments on Eph. 1:1).

and your love toward all the saints—Faith in the Lord Jesus must necessarily be accompanied by love for the saints. It is impossible to be in a right relationship with the head, while being cut off from all the rest of the body. Jesus said that love for one another was the identifying characteristic of his disciples (John 13:35).

V. 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you—Paul had left Ephesus for the last time around 57 A.D. As he writes this epistle from Roman imprisonment, some six years have gone by. Still, he is faithfully lifting up the Ephesian saints in his daily prayers. The fact that he did the same for so many other churches shows something of the prayer life this great apostle must have had (see Rom. 1:8; 1 Cor. 1:4; Phil. 1:3; Col. 1:3; 1 Thess. 1:2; 2 Thess. 1:3; and Philemon 4).

remembering you in my prayers—“out of sight, out of mind,” was not the way Paul operated. He gave thanks for those with whom he had served; he prayed for their well-being.

V. 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ—Jesus Christ revealed the true God to man (John 1:18). While many gods had been depicted in wood or stone, the true God was manifested in human flesh, in his only Son. To have seen Jesus was to have seen the Father (John 14:9), for Jesus was the visible image of the invisible God (Col. 1:15) and carried the very stamp of his nature (Heb.

1:3). Jesus is not only the full and final revelation of the Father, he is also the only access to him (John 14:6).

the Father of glory—God stands unchallenged in the magnitude of his glory. His glory is shining radiance and majestic splendor, and his dwelling is in unapproachable light. (See 1 Tim. 6:16.)

may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him—A Christian must have more than just raw enthusiasm. Unless he is grounded in truth and wisdom, his faith may be as short-lived as the froth whipped up by ocean waves. On the other hand, true Christianity is not an elaborate system of doctrines and theology. Paul chooses the perfect words here to avoid either extreme—ignorant enthusiasm or lifeless dogma.

The spirit of wisdom is an attitude of wise insight into reality. It is not an accumulation of facts, but an ability to understand the meaning of facts, and the meaning of life itself. “Revelation” is knowledge that goes beyond human observation and learning, coming from God himself. Perhaps most important of all, we should note that the real focus of both wisdom and revelation is **knowledge of God**. Even wisdom and revelation are worthless to a person if he does not know the Lord. (Consider Paul’s own situation in Phil. 3:4-11, especially verse 8.)

V. 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened—The eyes are the primary means by which we learn things. This beautiful figure of speech used by Paul is a prayer that our inner man (“your hearts”) may be enlightened and informed as to the real significance of certain spiritual realities. If the eyes of the heart are enlightened, the windows of the soul are thrown open to receive important truth.

that you may know—The word for “know” used here (*oida*) was used by the Greek to refer to knowledge that is perceived in the mind, even when it cannot be experienced with the senses of sight, hearing, or touch. The specific items which Paul will mention cannot be tested or measured by the skeptic. They must be perceived by those who walk by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

what is the hope to which he has called you—There is one hope of the Christian’s calling (Eph. 4:4). God has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light (1 Peter 2:9). The ultimate hope of every Christian is to dwell with God in his eternal glory and light (1 Tim. 6:16). We are exhorted to give diligence to make our calling and election sure (2 Peter 1:10) and to follow the example of Paul, who pressed on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:14).

what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints—While we have a wonderful hope of future bliss, we must not forget that God also has an inheritance (see comments on verses 11 and 12). The “riches of his inheritance in the saints” points to the fact that the Lord sees the church as a beautiful bride (Eph. 5:27). If our eyes more readily spot blemishes than beauty, we may have a difficult time understanding how the church could be so lovely in God’s eyes. God has a glorious possession in his people!

V. 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power—The third thing our hearts’ eyes need to see is God’s power. Like the hope of our calling and the riches of his inheritance, God’s power is unseen and unfelt by people who lack spiritual vision.

Before taking up the phrase-by-phrase discussion of what is said about God’s power, let us make three important observations about the statements which follow:

1. Paul piles up the greatest collection of “power” and “greatness” words to found in any single spot in all the Bible. He practically exhausts the vocabulary of the Greek language to emphasize his point.
2. The supreme example of God’s great power was not the creation of the world or the working of various great miracles of old. The supreme demonstration of God’s power was the raising of Jesus from death.
3. This same resurrection power is at work—**now—in us who believe!**

in us who believe—If God can make his power work in a dead man (as in Christ in the next verse), then he can make his power work in you!

What would you say of someone who did not believe in God’s power to raise Jesus from the dead? The Bible says such a person cannot be saved (Rom. 10:9). To deny God’s ability to do this would be a terrible and wicked thing.

What would you say of someone who did not believe in God’s power to work in *his* or *her* life to accomplish unbelievable things? Is it really any worse to deny that power in Jesus than to deny that power in yourself? The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in all believers, conquering spiritual death and giving spiritual life and strength. (See also Eph. 3:20-21).

According to the working of his great might—Literally, “according to the working of the strength of his might.” To show the impact of all these “power” words,

let us list them individually, starting with the words from verse nineteen.

“immeasurable”—Exceeding; going far beyond (from the Greek *hyperballon*).

“greatness”—Truly and very great (Gk. *megethos*).

“power”—Power; might; force; miracle and wonder (Gk. *Dynamis*, from which we get “dynamite”).

“working”—Inworking force or power, always used of supernatural rather than human power (Gk. *energeia*, from which we get “energy”).

“strength”—Power, strength, control (Gk. *cratos*, from which we get democracy, or “people-rule”).

“might”—Personal strength and ability.

V. 20 which he accomplished in Christ when he raised him from the dead—Of all the forces which man must struggle against, death seems to have won the most complete and final victory. Even if a man succeeds in war, in love, in financial affairs, and much more, he will sooner or later die. The rich and the wise die just like the fools (Eccl. 2:16). Since all men were helpless to defeat death, God stepped in to win an eternal victory. Death, the undefeated champion, fell to defeat with just one blow of God’s great power. That single blow was the resurrection of Jesus Christ. After twenty centuries the resurrection still stands as the basis of our faith, the historical proof that Christianity is uniquely true among all other religions (1 Cor. 15:1-20).

“Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy victory? O death, where is thy sting?” (1 Cor. 15:54-55)

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in God’s people. We are not managing the kingdom on earth by our own power and resources, thus “doing God a favor.” God is managing the kingdom himself, working through us with the power that he himself provides!

One final word should be said about the practical application of this “resurrection power.” This power is mentioned in the context (see verse 18) of things which cannot be physically felt or measured, but must be accepted on faith. Therefore, the presence of this power in our lives must be accepted as true, whether we “feel” it or not. If we sit down and do nothing until we “feel” divinely empowered, we will probably never do anything. Instead, we must take God at his word and launch out. Experience repeatedly teaches us that it is when we make ourselves available to God and have the faith to TRY, that God gives us unseen power to succeed. It is when we

TRY, and not before, that “resurrection power” works in us.

and made him sit at his right hand—God not only raised Jesus from the tomb, but raised him still higher to the throne. To sit at the “right hand” meant to share in the authority which controls all things in heaven and earth. When Christ assumed this royal seat, the prophecy was fulfilled which God had made long ago through David:

“The Lord says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.’” (Psalm 110:1)

in the heavenly places—See comments on verse three.

V. 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion—These words were currently being used in reverence to various ranks of angels. It is likely that Paul had these angel ranks in mind here (see also Col. 1:16 and Rom. 8:37). Jesus sits at the right hand of God, superior to every angel in heaven or hell (Heb. 1:3-14).

It was especially pertinent to show Christ’s superiority over angels because of problems then arising in Asia Minor. Certain Christian groups were giving angels undue prominence, even to the point of worshipping them! (See Col. 2:18).

and above every name that is named—Jesus is superior to angels in the name by which he is called (Heb. 1:4). God has “highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth” (Phil. 2:9-10).

not only in this age but also in that which is to come—Christ’s exaltation to the throne, seated beside the Father, is not temporary. Throughout the remainder of man’s time on earth and throughout all eternity in the heavenly kingdom, Christ will sit on his throne as Co-Regent of all existence.

V. 22 and he has put all things under his feet—God has subjected all the universe, visible and invisible, under the authority of his Son. This is also in fulfillment of the prophecy of Psalm 110:1 (see comments on verse 20). The New Testament makes reference to this verse more than any other verse in the Old Testament.

and has made him the head over all things—The Father has designated the Son to be the supreme head and ruler of all things. Since all authority has been given to Jesus (Matt. 28:18) he has the right to issue commands to his subjects. His subjects must not merely pay lip-service to his authority and lordship (Matt. 7:21), but must do whatever he demands.

for the church—Christ is not just the head of the church; he is head of all creation **for the church**. It is for

the sake of, and to the advantage of, the church that Christ reigns over the universe.

This is the first time Paul uses the word “church” in the epistle. It is translated from the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “a called-out assembly.” Most of the uses of *ekklesia* in the New Testament refer to local congregations. In this verse, however, it is the universal church—the worldwide body of all God’s children—that is meant. This was also the sense of the word when Jesus said, “On this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it.” (Matt. 16:18).

We must be careful, however, that we do not fall into the modern trap of claiming to love the “invisible, universal church” while despising all the local manifestations of it!

V. 23 which is his body—The church is the body of Christ (Col. 1:18), just as surely as human flesh was once his body. While his body of flesh never got more than 200 miles from Jerusalem, his body of believers reaches around the world. While his body of flesh was subject to death, his body of believers cannot be stopped. The more the early martyrs were killed, the stronger the body became!

Most of Ephesians has to do with the Christian’s role as a member of Christ’s body. So much of our individual duties and our shared relationships with one another will become clear, if we can just remember that we are one body, and Jesus is the head.

the fullness of him who fills all in all—The church is the fullness of Christ in the sense that a head without a body is incomplete. Christ, who is all-sufficient, has deliberately chosen to depend upon his body of believers to accomplish his work on earth. He did not really need us to fill anything, but has chosen to work through us as his body.

Study Questions

1. Why did Paul say he had “heard of” their faith when he had spent three years in Ephesus personally?
2. How is God going to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation? In what form will it come?
3. What three specific things did Paul pray that his readers might come to know?
4. What is the greatest demonstration of God’s power in history?
5. Is the resurrection of Jesus something we accept on faith or on fact?
6. What does God’s ability to raise Jesus from the dead mean to you?
7. Have you ever been guilty of doubting God’s ability to work through you to accomplish anything for his kingdom?
8. What are several specific things a head does for a body?
9. In what way is Jesus dependent upon the church? If he is all-powerful and all-sufficient, why does he need us to labor in his kingdom on earth?

Lesson Three (2:1-10)

From Death to Life (2:1-10)

1 And you he made alive, when you were dead through the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience. 3 Among these we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, following the desires of body and mind, and so we were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. 4 But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead through our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up with him, and made us sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God— 9 not because of works, lest any man should boast. 10 For we are his workmanship, created in Christ