

The God to whom we address our prayers is the one and only God, for in the mystery of the incarnation, He is the God to Whom Yeshua addressed His prayers. If our risen and victorious Savior Yeshua addressed His prayers to the Father, then surely we must likewise pray to Him and only to Him.

Secondly Paul refers to the Father as “the Father of glory” (ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης), where the genitive “of glory” is doubtlessly a genitive of description, meaning “glorious Father.” This means that

the God to whom he prays is the origin and defining example of glory... The glory that God displays is the splendor or brightness that is often characteristic of God’s power, authority, and honor in the OT and that he graciously shares with his people.<sup>1</sup>

Being the God of glory emphasizes the fact that He is to be constantly praised, for all good things come from Him. And in this context, it is the abundance of His grace in saving sinners that is the very height of His glory.

*... may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him.* – Paul began his prayer request for the Ephesians by emphasizing the eternal attributes of God to Whom the request is given. He prays to the God of all glory, the Giver of abundant grace. He then continues to relate the specific request of his prayer. He is moved to make such a request because of the majesty and power of the God to Whom he prays. What is more, having emphasized the relationship between the Father and the Son, Paul signals his confidence that his prayer will be answered, for Yeshua Himself teaches us that when those who are His true disciples request anything in accordance with His word, He will grant the request.

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (Jn 15:7)

That for which Paul petitions the Lord on behalf of the Ephesians is summed up in the phrase (that He) “may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation.” It will be important to look carefully at what this request of the Apostle entails if we are to understand it as he intended. First, the request is for all of the Ephesian believers, as made clear from the fact that the pronoun “you” is plural in the Greek (ὑμῖν, *humin*).

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1 Thielman, *Ephesians*, p. 95.

Paul is not making this request for specific persons in the community, such as leaders or prominent individuals but on behalf of all those who make up the community of believers.

Second, the request of Paul is that God would give the Ephesian believers “a spirit of wisdom and of revelation” (πνεῦμα σοφίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως). The manner of this request raises an important question: is Paul asking God to give the Ephesian believers a “disposition” of wisdom and revelation? That is, should we read the word πνεῦμα, “spirit” as referring to a person’s own spirit, or is Paul referring to the Spirit of God? There are a number of reasons that some interpret Paul’s words here as referring to the human spirit, and thus that he is praying to God that the Ephesian believers would have an inner disposition or spiritual desire to seek God and His truth in greater ways. Those who take this interpretation generally offer the following support:

1. The word “spirit” (πνεῦμα, *pneuma*) is anarthrous, that is, without the definite article “the.” If Paul meant the “Holy Spirit,” he would have written “*the* Spirit of wisdom and of revelation.” But this is not a valid argument, for there are numbers of times in the Apostolic Scriptures when the Holy Spirit is referenced without the definite article. For example, note Rom 8:4, 5, 9. In the quote below I’ve marked the word “the” to show where it is not found in the Greek.

so that the requirement of the Torah might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to *the* Spirit (ἀλλὰ κατὰ πνεῦμα). For those who are according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who are according to *the* Spirit (κατὰ πνεῦμα), the things of the Spirit...However, you are not in the flesh but in *the* Spirit (ἐν πνεύματι), if indeed *the* Spirit of God (πνεῦμα θεοῦ) dwells in you. But if anyone does not have *the* Spirit of Messiah (εἰ δέ τις πνεῦμα Χριστοῦ), he does not belong to Him. (Rom 8:4, 5, 9)<sup>1</sup>

2. A second point of support for taking “spirit” in Paul’s prayer to refer to the human spirit is that in other places Paul uses “spirit” (πνεῦμα, *pneuma*) in this way. He speaks of a “spirit of bondage” (Rom 8:15), “spirit of stupor” (Rom 11:8), and “spirit of timidity” (2Tim 1:7)

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1 Note also Rom 8:13, 14; Gal 5:5, 16, 18; 1Cor 2:13; 12:3, 13, Eph 5:18, 6:18.

3. A third argument used by those who interpret Paul to be speaking about the human spirit in his prayer, is that he has just previously, in vv. 13–14, taught that the Spirit of God has been given to all believers, for He is the very “seal” that marks them as belonging to God and the very “earnest” or “down payment” insuring their eternal inheritance. Thus, since the Ephesian believers already have the Spirit of God abiding in them, it would not make sense that Paul is asking that the Father “give them the Spirit.” He must therefore be praying that their own spirit would be moved to seek wisdom and revelation of God.

A good number of English Bibles take this view, putting the word “spirit” in our text without an initial capital “s” (NASB, NET, HCBS, CJB, NRSV, KJV). Of the eight translations surveyed, only the ESV and NIV indicate that Paul is speaking of the Spirit of God, by capitalizing “Spirit.”

But the primary issue that stands against this view, that in our verse Paul is referring to the human spirit rather than to the Spirit of God, are the following genitives: “spirit of wisdom and revelation” which must define that which the “spirit” accomplishes. While “wisdom” (*σοφία, sophia*) could surely describe that which the human spirit possesses, this cannot be the case with “revelation.”

We have already encountered the word “wisdom” (*sophia*) in v. 8, which is a fitting parallel to v. 17. For in v. 8, Paul is speaking of the “wisdom (*sophia*) and insight (*phronēsis*) given to the elect by which they are drawn to God and come to accept and espouse the free gift of the Gospel, committing themselves to Yeshua as their Savior. All of which is the result of God’s abundant grace lavished upon them.

While Greek *sophia* carries the sense of true insight of known facts or insight into the true nature of things,<sup>1</sup> “revelation” (*ἀποκαλύψις, apokalupsis*), is used to convey the idea of “unveiling,” “to disclose something that had previously been hidden.”

Revelation is not the impartation of knowledge, but the actual unveiling of intrinsically hidden facts.<sup>2</sup>

1 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 256.

2 Оерке, “ἀποκαλύπτω, ἀποκάλυψις,” *TDNT* 3.591; Mundle, “Revelation,” *NIDNTT* 3.312–15.

As Hoehner states:

Those who think that it [“spirit”] refers to the Holy Spirit do so because the qualities of wisdom and revelation cannot be generated by humans.... although the first view [that “spirit” is the human spirit] can define the “spirit of wisdom” as “a wise disposition,” it cannot explain the “spirit of revelation,” for revelation (*ἀποκάλυψις*) is not the understanding of the hidden things but the disclosing of them.

Indeed, in the third chapter of our epistle Paul stresses that the “revelation” he received was the result of the Spirit’s work.

that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief. By referring to this, when you read you can understand my insight into the mystery of Messiah, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit; (Eph 3:3–5)

Further, those who seek to interpret “the spirit of revelation” as the spiritual gift (*χάρισμα, charisma*) of prophecy have missed the point that in our text Paul prays that the “spirit of wisdom and revelation” be given to all those he addresses in the letter.

We must conclude, then, that Paul is referring to the Spirit of God in the phrase “Spirit of wisdom and revelation.” How then are we to understand Paul’s meaning when he prays for the Ephesian believers that God would “give you [plural] the Spirit of wisdom and revelation”? It seems to me that the best understanding of our text is that it describes the work of the Spirit of God in the life of a believer. For the initial giving of the Ruach at the time of coming to faith initiates His ongoing work in the redeemed child of God whereby He continues to urge the believer to feed upon the Scriptures and reveals the proper application of the word of God in each individual’s life. Moreover, it is the work of the Spirit to empower the believer to grow in sanctification and thus to apply the wisdom of God to life’s situations and choices. This is what Paul is praying for, that the Ephesian believers would learn more and more to know and submit to the Spirit’s leading in their lives, and thus to come to a true and intimate relationship with the Almighty. For this is the very realm and purpose of the Spirit’s work, as the final phrase of our verse makes clear.

...in the knowledge of Him. – Paul prays that God would give the Ephesian believers “the Spirit of wisdom and revelation” with the result that they would live “in the knowledge of Him,” that is, in the “God of our Lord Yeshua Messiah, the Father of glory.” Here, once again, we find Paul emphasizing the triune nature of the one true God, for Father, Messiah, and Ruach are all as one in our verse.

The Greek of this final phrase utilizes the word *ἐπίγνωσις* (*epignōsis*) to describe the “knowledge” of God granted to the believer in Yeshua. Some would say that this word, *epignōsis*, is essentially a synonym with the common Greek word for “knowledge,” i.e., *γνώσις* (*gnōsis*). But very often in Koine Greek, an added preposition gives a “perfective” sense to the noun. In our word, *epignōsis*, the preposition *ἐπί* (*epi*) is added to *gnōsis* to yield *epignōsis*, and may indicate acquired knowledge through multiple stages of learning, thus, “knowledge upon knowledge.” While in the Lxx it appears likely that *gnōsis* and *epignōsis* are often used as synonyms, by the time the Apostolic Scriptures were being written, the battle against nascent Gnosticism caused the Apostolic message to distance itself from utilizing the common vocabulary of the Gnostics. Schütz, writing on the word *epignōsis*, states:

In the Pastorals, however, a definite doctrinal tradition is evident, and all entanglement with “godless and silly myths” (1Tim 4:7) is forbidden. Hence, gnostic terminology has been in great measure eliminated and replaced by other terms. *Gnōsis* is regarded as a technical term for the gnostic heresy (cf. 1Tim 6:20) and *epignōsis* takes its place, when it refers to Christian knowledge (1Tim 2:4; 2Tim 2:25; 2:7; Tit 1:1). It has, however, quite clearly an intellectual, semi-dogmatic stress. The knowledge of God’s truth is of equal importance with experiential profession of the Lord, and finally pushes it into the background. Hence, conversion to the Christian faith can be described almost technically as coming to a knowledge (*epignōsis*) of the truth.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, in our text, we hear Paul praying for the Ephesians that they would have “accurate knowledge” of God. This means knowledge that is in line with God’s self-revelation in Yeshua, and in the inspired Scriptures. Paul’s desire was that the believers would have an accurate knowledge of God through the revelation in Yeshua as illumined by

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1 Schütz, “Knowledge” in *NIDNTT*, 2:

the Ruach through the Scriptures. Such “accurate knowledge” is not only an unshakable grasp of the facts, but a knowledge that results in a growing, personal relationship with the Almighty. Worldly philosophy has as its goal to “know yourself.” The goal of the believer in Yeshua is to “know your God, through the work of the Ruach HaKodesh.”<sup>1</sup>

**18–19 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.**

The understanding of v. 17 given above fits perfectly with Paul’s continuing description of his prayer for the Ephesians. He prays that the “eyes of your<sup>2</sup> heart may be enlightened.” The NASB has repeated the words “I pray” in order to more easily translate this very long sentence into smoother English. The Greek actually begins v. 18 with a perfect participle (πεφωτισμένους < φωτίζω), “to illuminate,” which would be translated “since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened,” the perfect tense generally describing an action in the past which has ongoing effect in the present and future. The NET Bible takes the opening phrase of this verse to indicate the basis for Paul’s prayer.

I pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you spiritual wisdom and revelation in your growing knowledge of him,—since the eyes of your heart have been enlightened—so that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. (Eph 1:18–19a)

Thus, Paul is referencing the initial work of the Spirit in the life of the believer when the blinded eyes are made to see the truth about Yeshua and the gift of faith is exercised in receiving Yeshua as one’s savior. That initial work of the Spirit continues on in the believer’s life. Thus Paul is not praying for a new work of the Spirit in the lives of the Ephesian believers, but rather that the Ephesians would continue to submit to the leading and work of the Spirit in their lives in the process of sanctification unto God and from the ungodly aspects of the world.

That Paul speaks of the “eyes of your heart” reminds us that in

1 Hoehner, *Ephesians*, p. 259.

2 The word “your” (ὁμῶν) is lacking in ℘<sup>46</sup> B 33 1739 but is found in many other manuscripts and versions. It surely is implied by the context.

the Tanach, the heart very often refers to the place of one's volition, the seat of moral and intellectual life. It is in the heart that one makes decisions and discerns the distinction between that which is righteous and what is unrighteous. Thus, for Paul to use the metaphor of "eyes of the heart," he is giving us a picture of "seeing" the difference between right and wrong, and desiring to live in accordance with God's ways in order to honor Him, to express our love for Him, and to show forth His glory and greatness. Once again, it is the work of the Spirit applying the truth of Scriptures, that shines the light of God's truth into the hearts of His children.

...so that you will know what is the hope of His calling – Paul has already used the word "hope" in v. 12 when he wrote of those who were "first to hope in Messiah," and thus we already know that Paul's use of the word "hope" (ἐλπίζω, *elpizō*) does not mean "to wish for something" or "to dream about what might be," but rather to have a firm grasp on what has been promised. This is why he prays that the Ephesian believers would "know" this hope, that is, to know what God has promised and to live with the assurance of that truth, which rests upon the omnipotence and holiness of God to bring about His declared purposes.

Here, the Greek word translated "know" is οἶδα (*oída*) rather than γινώσκω (*ginōskō*) and some would tend to make a distinction between the two, that *ginōskō* stresses the intellectual activity in knowing, while *oída* pictures more a learning through experience. But in reality, only the context in which the words are used can determine if such a distinction was in the mind of the author. Most scholars agree that Paul is using both terms as synonyms in our text. But it may be that *oída* fits better with the metaphor of "seeing with the eyes of the heart," for it tends to be used where something is discovered or uncovered.

In our verses, there are three things that Paul prays the Ephesian believers will know: (1) the hope of His calling, (2) the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and (3) the surpassing greatness of His power. All of these are united in what Paul means by the "hope of His calling." For Paul uses the word "calling" to describe God's sovereign drawing of His elect unto Himself. We see this same usage in Rom 8 where all who are "called" are also "justified" and "glorified."

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified. (Rom 8:29-30)