

# Ephesians 1:15-19

- Give us the Spirit of wisdom and revelation -

**Author: Evert Jan Hempenius**

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## Introduction

- ❖ The letter to the Ephesians might be compared to a gothic cathedral, a cathedral of faith. The outside is beautiful, looking at the pinnacles, the majestic entrances, one gets overwhelmed by the artistry. Once inside, the visitor is silenced and gently forced to sit down and to look, to look at the ceilings, the walls, the pillars, the glass-stained windows. These cathedrals have been built by architects and artisans. These cathedrals were not only built to the glory of God, honestly speaking, but also to the glory of the city and men.
- ❖ The letter to the Ephesians can also be compared with a tapestry. All the threads are woven and knitted together to show one great picture of the grace and glory of God in Christ.
- ❖ There is a lot of attention for the special manifestations of the Holy Spirit. The focus of the writer (Paul) in this letter is different.
  - He is the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to God the Father and the love of our Lord Jesus Christ better (Eph 1:17; 3:5; 3:16-19; 5:15-18).
  - The Spirit enables access to the Father, through Christ (Eph 2:18; 6:18). By the Spirit, the church is dwelling for God, a temple (Eph 2:22; 5:18-20; 1 Pet 2:5, 9; Rev 1:5, 6).
  - The unity of the Spirit is stressed (Eph 4:3-6).
  - The Spirit has been given as a seal (Eph 1:13; 4:30).
- ❖ This study concentrates on Ephesians 1:15-19. It will be made clear that the prayer for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation is of the utmost importance for the church in Ephesus and today's church.
- ❖ This study and outline can be used together with its 'twin'- outline (Eph 1:19-23).

- ❖ The context, form and structure, theological notes, technical and hermeneutical notes given in this sermon outline below show some overlap with other sermon outlines taken from Paul's Letter to the Ephesians. This makes it possible to use this sermon outline as a "stand-alone" and as part of a series.

## Literary and historical context

- ❖ The City of Ephesus:<sup>1</sup>
  - The city was an important administrative and commercial hub of the Roman province of Asia. Nowadays the remnants of the magnificent city theatre can still be viewed. It had a seating capacity of 24,000 people (Acts 19:30-41). The temple of Artemis was famous and already classified in the ancient world as one of the seven wonders of the world. Numerous other gods and goddesses were worshipped.
- ❖ The City of Ephesus in the New Testament:
  - Paul visited Ephesus for the first time only briefly on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 18:18-22). After he had left the city, Priscilla and Aquila continued to preach the gospel (Acts 18:24-28).
  - Paul visited the city for a second time and stayed there for more than two years (Acts 19): **"This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord."** More churches were probably established during these years (Rev 2-3) in the Roman province of Asia.
    - Paul must have encountered severe conditions while he was in Ephesus. In his letter to the Corinthians, he wrote: **"If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus** for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, 'Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die'" (1 Cor 15:32). The majority of recent scholars postulate that Paul was in prison one or more times while he was in Ephesus.
  - Paul met the Elders of the church on the beach of the city of Miletus (Acts 20:13-38) when he travelled to Jerusalem.
  - Jews from Asia recognized Paul when he entered the temple in Jerusalem: **"Some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple.** They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him" (Acts 21:27; 24:19).
  - Later, Paul sent Timothy to Ephesus (1 Tim 1:3) to support this church through teaching and instructions.

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesus. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 249-253). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

- ❖ Finally, the apostle John received his Revelation of Jesus Christ and sent it to the seven churches in Asia, the first being Ephesus (Rev 1:11; 2:1-7). According to old church traditions, John probably stayed in Ephesus.
- ❖ An overview of the letter to the Ephesians and the context of 1:15-19:

1:1-2	Salutation
1:3-14	Blessing or glorification of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit
1:15-23	First prayer and thanksgiving to God
2:1-22	Gentiles and Jews are both made alive in Christ – a new creation, a holy temple in the Lord
3:1-13	Admonition: don't be discouraged because of my sufferings (Paul)
3:14-22	Second prayer and glorification of God
4:1-6:9	Admonition: live a life worthy of the calling you have received:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4:1-16</li> <li>• 4:17-5:20</li> <li>• 5:21-6:9</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Live a life of love within the community of the church, which is the body of Christ</li> <li>• Live a life of love as a new creation in Christ, as children of God, filled with the Holy Spirit</li> <li>• Live a life of love, especially within the family-household</li> </ul>
6:10-20	The spiritual warfare
6:21-24	Greetings

## Form and structure

- ❖ Ephesians 1:15-23 consists of two parts:

Paul is praying for the church (verse 15-19)	
<i>Reason:</i>	<p><sup>15</sup> For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints,</p> <p><sup>16</sup> I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.</p>
<i>Prayer:</i>	<p><sup>17</sup> I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, (1.a) may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation,</p>

	<p>(1.b) so that you may know him better.</p> <p><sup>18</sup> I pray also</p> <p>(2.a) that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened</p> <p>(2.b) in order that you may know</p> <p>(2.b.1) the hope to which he has called you,</p> <p>(2.b.2) the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,</p> <p>(2.b.3) <sup>19</sup> and his incomparably great power for us who believe.</p>
<b>And explaining the greatness of the power of God (verse 19-23)</b>	
<i>The power</i>	<p>That power is like the working of his mighty strength,</p> <p><sup>20</sup> which he exerted in Christ</p> <p>when he raised him from the dead</p> <p>and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms,</p> <p><sup>21</sup> far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given,</p> <p>not only in the present age but also in the one to come.</p> <p><sup>22</sup> And God placed all things under his feet</p> <p>and appointed him to be head over everything for the church,</p> <p><sup>23</sup> which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.</p>

## Technical, theological and hermeneutical notes

### Literary notes:

- ❖ The authorship and addressees of this letter have much been debated.<sup>2</sup> Pauline authorship is affirmed by tradition and autobiographical information.

### General theological notes:

- ❖ The letter to the Ephesians is essentially Trinitarian:
  - Ephesians 1:3-14. "Praise be **to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ**.... Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised **Holy Spirit**, who is a deposit

<sup>2</sup> Arnold, C. (1993). Ephesians, Letter to. In *Dictionary of Paul and his Letters* (pp. 240-242). Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press.

guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession—to the praise of his glory.”

- Ephesians 1:17: “I keep asking that **the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.**”
- Ephesians 2:18: “For through **him** (Jesus Christ) we both have access to the **Father** by **one Spirit.**” (See also Eph 2:22; 3:5.)
- Ephesians 3:14-19: “For this reason I kneel before the **Father**,... I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through **his Spirit** in your inner being, so that **Christ** may dwell in your hearts through faith...”
- Ephesians 4:4-6: “There is one body and one **Spirit**— just as you were called to one hope when you were called— <sup>5</sup> one **Lord**, one faith, one baptism; <sup>6</sup> one **God and Father** of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”
  - Paul begins his letter with an exclamation of praise to God (Eph 1:3) and the mercies of God, especially his love: “But because of **his great love for us, God**, who is rich in mercy” (Eph 2:4).
  - Christ is the exalted one (Eph 1:21-22). He is the head of all creation (Eph 1:10) and especially of his body the church (Eph 4:15).

❖ Unity of the believers with Christ, the “saints in Ephesus, **the faithful in Christ Jesus**”:

- The expression “in Christ” or “in him” occurs thirty-four times! There is a mystic corporate unity and solidarity of all believers in Christ, which is practised in the local congregation.
  - In him we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7). “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan” of God (Eph 1:11).
  - God “made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:5-6).

Hermeneutical notes:

- ❖ Paul wrote this letter to the Ephesians, although both assertions have been contested by scholars (see above).
  - For the exposition, it is fruitful to refer to the implied author and the implied addressee. We can't meet Paul nor the Ephesians personally. There is a distance of place and time between the first readers, Paul, and the 21<sup>st</sup>-century reader. But we can get to know them both through the contents of this letter. The author (Paul) tells some things about himself, personal information, style of writing, his concerns. The same is true for the Ephesians, but the information we receive is given by the implied author.

- ❖ The implied author makes himself known by:
  - Personal remarks, such as **“As a prisoner for the Lord,”** which tell something about his situation.
  - The use of personal pronouns, such as “I”, “my” and to a lesser extent “we”, because in this case he includes others as well.
  - His theological statements, acclamations and prayers, which are embedded in and function in the larger Christian community.
- ❖ The implied audience is made known by the author of the letter:
  - When he writes about their local and sometimes personal circumstances.
  - When he uses specific personal pronouns, such as “you”, “we” – including himself, “they”, when he is writing about others.
  - When he uses imperatives and specific figures or style, such as hyperboles, understatements, irony. Take, for example, Ephesians 4:2-4:
    - **“I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received”** (Eph 4:2) tells us something about Paul and the Ephesians:
    - To Paul, it is important (**“I urge”**) to live a life worthy before God.
      - Paul is concerned about the conduct of the Ephesians (**“I urge you”**). These concerns are exemplified by verse 3: **“Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”**
      - Because, by implication, (some) were not humble and gentle; (some) were not patient, not bearing with one another in love. And by doing so, breaking up the bond of peace (verse 4).

### Power and Glory

- ❖ Power and glory are important themes which the Spirit will show the believers.
  - There are two passages in which Paul addresses the power of God, the power of the enemy, and the spiritual war in which the believers are engaged:
    - Ephesians 2:19-23;
    - Ephesians 6:10-12(-18).

## Exposition

### Verse 3-14 summary

- ❖ This most important part of the letter consists of three sections, each ending with “to the praise of glorious grace.” The author is glorifying God. Everything is “in Christ.” The plan of God is revealed by “in accordance with”/“according to.”
  - (verse 3-6) - *election*
    - Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.
    - For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight.
    - In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ,
      - in accordance with his pleasure and will—
    - to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.
  - (verse 7-12) - *redemption*
    - In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins,
      - in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.
    - And he made known to us the mystery of his will
      - according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.
    - In him we were also chosen, having been predestined
      - according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.
  - (verse 13-14) - *inheritance*
    - And you also were included in Christ
      - when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation.
      - Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God’s possession—to the praise of his glory.
- ❖ Some remarks:
  - We – You: In verse 3-12 Paul uses “we”. In verse 13 and 14 he is addressing the congregation “you.” Both “we” and “you” receive the inheritance “our.” This means that everything he has written in verse 3-12 is also applied to the church in Ephesus.
    - Who are these “we”? This is Paul and the brothers who are with him, only Tychicus (Eph 6:21) is mentioned by name.
  - “Every spiritual blessing” “in Christ” (verse 3):
    - Election to be holy and blameless (verse 4);
    - Predestined to be adopted as his sons (verse 5);

- Also (verse 11);
  - Redemption through his blood (verse 7);
  - Made known the mystery of his will for the future (verse 9) inheritance (14).
- Everything is according to his will, love, grace and plan (verse 5, 7, 9 and 11).
- The future: “to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ” (verse 9). This verse will be elaborated in verse 19-23!
- Before reading further, it is necessary to pause for a moment and to have look at the person of Christ.
  - Already before the creation, the believers were chosen in Christ, the Lord Jesus. Everything we receive, we receive in Christ! He is from eternity.
  - Christ will receive all power, cosmic power (verse 9). He is Lord of all.

#### Verse 15-17

- ❖ **“For this reason.”** It can also be rendered as “Because of all that God has done.” In this way, it may refer to all that has been said in the previous verses,<sup>3</sup> which are introduced by “every spiritual blessing in Christ.” (See above.)
- ❖ **“Ever since I heard.”** The apostle had spent a couple of years in this city. After he had left, the churches started informing him about their situation. There must have been a lively correspondence, people were travelling back and forth, such as Prisca and Aquila (Rom 16:3 a.o.). A nice example of informing each other is also found in 3 John. Not only Paul but also other apostles were well informed. Revelation 2-3 is a further example. And as a response, they were sending letters or representatives who took the letters along with them, like Tychicus (Eph 6:21, 22). Two things were important to Paul:
  - **“about your faith in the Lord Jesus”;** “how you trusted in the Lord Jesus.” It is about commitment and dependence and not a merely intellectual acceptance of some truth.<sup>4</sup>
  - **“and your love for all the saints”.**
    - The apostle gives thanks for faith and love. At the same time, it functions as a **“captatio benevolentiae.”** This means “winning of goodwill” and is a rhetorical technique aimed to capture the attention of the audience from the start.
    - In this letter, Paul is making statements about the faith of the recipients, and he is admonishing the believers:
 

Ephesians 2:8: **“For it is by grace you have been saved,** through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—.”

Ephesians 3:12: **“In him (Christ) and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence.”**

<sup>3</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 29).

<sup>4</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 29).



Ephesians 3:17: “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”

Ephesians 4:5: “one Lord, one faith, one baptism.”

Ephesians 4:12, 13: “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ (the visible church) may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Ephesians 6:12: “In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.”

- The love for all the saints is based on the love of God:

Ephesians 2:4, 5: “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.”

Ephesians 3:17-19: “And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”

Ephesians 4:2: “Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.”

Ephesians 4:15, 16: “Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.”

Ephesians 5:1, 2: “Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.” See also Ephesians 5:22-33.

Ephesians 6:24: “Grace to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with an undying love.”

- Yes there is faith and there is love but the apostle Paul wants to make clear:
  - Ephesians 4:17(-23): “So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.” “You, however, did not come to know Christ that way” (4:20). “But among you, there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God’s holy people” (5:3). “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light” (5:8). “Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise” (5:15). “Do not get

drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit” (5:18).

- All this information about the church and its members was known to Paul and gave him (probably) the occasion and urgency to write this letter to the Ephesians, and for his prayers:

❖ **“I have not stopped”**

- **These words reveal also the urgent character of the letter.**
- **“giving thanks”** and **“remembering you”**: remembering you involves mentioning you in my prayers.
  - Luke described the final meeting, which Paul had with the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:13-38). It was an emotional farewell.
  - “Petitionary prayer is an essential weapon in his apostolic armoury. Paul knows that he is engaged in a deadly spiritual warfare and needs to make use of the whole armour of God; he heeds his own advice to ‘Pray at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication’ (Eph. 6:18). At the same time, he urges his readers to support him in their petitions (6:19, 20).”<sup>5</sup>
- **Paul is focused on the past, present and future in this part of the letter!**

Verse 17-19

- ❖ **“(I keep asking)”** added by the translators for clarity.
  - Note the trinitarian character of the prayer: the glorious Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Spirit. See also Ephesians 3:14-19.
- ❖ **“that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father”** the address of the prayers. See also Ephesians 1:3-14.
  - **“the glorious Father,”**
    - **“Glorious”** = **“δόξα”**: 1. **the condition of being bright or shining, brightness, splendor, radiance.**<sup>6</sup> **“Majesty”** as an old term for royal beings who have, or had, both power and splendor, has been suggested.<sup>7</sup>
  - This glory features prominently in the first three chapters of this letter and remarkably in relation to the two prayers (first prayer: Eph 1:6, 12, 14, 17, 18; second prayer: Eph 3:16, 21).

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<sup>5</sup> O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 129).

<sup>6</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 257).

<sup>7</sup> Best, E. (1998, p. 162).

- **“Father”** reminds the believers of verse 5: “In love he predestined **us to be adopted as his sons** through Jesus Christ.” As Father, he has prepared the inheritance (Eph 1:14, 18). The adopted sons are heirs (Eph 3:6) in Christ.

❖ **“may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation”**

- He is the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of wisdom, and also the Spirit of truth (Jn 14:16, 17).
  - Isaiah 11:2: “The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him— **the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding**, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord—“ (See also Lk 21:15; Jn 14:17, 26; 16:13, 14; further: 1 Cor 2:6–16)
- **“And revelation”** = “ἀποκάλυψις”: 1. **making fully known, revelation, disclosure**; a. of the revelation of truth (see also Luke 2:32; Mt 11:25; 16:17).<sup>8</sup>
- He is the spirit of the sonship (Eph 1:13, 14). Paul wrote in his letter to the Romans:
  - **“You received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’ The Spirit himself testifies with our spirit that we are God’s children.”**
- A: **“so that they may know him better.”**
  - Especially the power of God, his love and his grace. “know him better” is to live in communion with God (Jn 17:3). O’Brien: “Paul’s view of knowledge is largely determined by the Old Testament. To know God means to be in a close personal relationship with him because he has made himself known. There is an obedient and grateful acknowledgement of his deeds on behalf of his people. The knowledge of God begins with a fear of him, is linked with his demands, and often is described as knowing his will. In the Old Testament, as well as in the writings of Paul, knowledge is not a fixed quantum but rather something that develops in the life of people as they are obedient.”<sup>9</sup>

**“To know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God”** (Eph 3:19). To know Christ as he made himself known (Eph 4:10; see also 4:20).
  - Paul uses two different Greek words meaning to **know**. This will not be discussed in this outline.
- B: **“That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know”**:
  - **“For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light”** (Eph 5:9).

<sup>8</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 112).

<sup>9</sup> O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 132, 133).

- He mentions three special topics:
  - (1) “the hope to which he has called you,”
  - (2) “the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,”
  - (3) “and his incomparably great power for us who believe.”
    - The “**eyes**” 2. **mental and spiritual understanding**, *eye, understanding*.<sup>10</sup>  
With these eyes the believers can understand the mystery of faith: Ephesians 3:6: “This mystery is that through **the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel**, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” (See also Eph 6:19).
    - The “**heart**” is the centre and source of the whole inner life, with its thinking, feeling, and volition.<sup>11</sup>
- “**the hope to which he has called you**,” (Also Eph 4:1, 4)
  - Ephesians 2:12: “**remember that at that time you were separate from Christ**, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, **without hope and without God in the world.**”
  - God “**has called.**” This is not an invitation but an effective call (Eph 2:8).
- “**the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.**” The apostle wishes the readers to know how great the rich fulness of this glory is.<sup>12</sup> This is described in the next chapters:
 

“Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit” (Eph 2:19-22; see also Rev 21, 22; 1 Pet 2:5).

“And to know this love that surpasses knowledge—**that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God**” (Eph 3:19).

“To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles **the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory**” (Col 1:27).
- When the eyes of the heart are enlightened, the believer will discover the work God has done within him:

<sup>10</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 744).

<sup>11</sup> Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 508).

<sup>12</sup> Abbott, T. K. (1909, p. 30).

<b>That the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know</b>	
<i>Ephesians 1:19-21</i>	<i>Ephesians 2:4-7</i>
<p>... his incomparably great power for us who believe. <b>That power</b> is like the working of his mighty strength,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- which he exerted in Christ when <b>he raised him</b> from the dead</li> <li>- and <b>seated him</b> at his right hand <b>in the heavenly realms</b>,</li> <li>- far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given,</li> <li>- not only in the present age but also <b>in the one to come</b>.</li> </ul>	<p><b>(That power)</b> made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- And God <b>raised us</b> up with Christ</li> <li>- and <b>seated us</b> with him <b>in the heavenly realms</b> in Christ Jesus,</li> <li>- in order that <b>in the coming ages</b> he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.</li> </ul>

Verse 19-23 summary

❖ **“Incomparably great power”** (verse 19.a)

- This power is a spiritual power which effects the physical life in this world.
  - It is the creative power of God (Rom 1:20).
- In a compound description for rhetorical purposes, Paul stresses the incomparability of the power of God. For the meaning of the different words, see above.
- This power is revealed in:
  - **“in Christ when he raised him from the dead.”** There are two aspects:
    - By raising Christ from the dead, God the Father declared Christ to be righteous, and:

- “who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom 1:4).
  - By raising Christ from the dead, “Death has been swallowed up in victory” (1 Cor 15:54).
  - **“and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms”** (also: Acts 1:9-11). Because he is the righteous one, God the Father gave Christ the authority to rule and to judge.
    - Foulkes remarked: “The ascension may not often be described in the New Testament (Mark 16:19; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9), **but it is constantly assumed, and its significance stressed** (e.g. Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 1 Pet. 3:22). To Paul, and in the New Testament generally, **the cross, the resurrection and the ascension are considered as three parts of one great act of God.**”<sup>13</sup>
- ❖ **“far above all rule and authority....”**
- “In Jewish thought these powers were viewed as angels, of which there were ranks and degrees, or as spirits (evil); in Greek thought they were seen as lesser gods and powers. The author here takes their existence for granted and does not argue about it.”<sup>14</sup> See also Colossians 1:16.
    - These powers stand behind the earthly (political, religious, judicial, economic and social) institutions which are responsible for oppression and persecution.
- ❖ **“not only in the present age but also in the one to come”**
- The present age. This age is essentially evil. The devil claimed this age or world to be his: “the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. ‘All this I will give you,’ he said” (Mt 4:8, 9).
  - The age to come. This is the messianic age.
- ❖ **“And God placed all things under his feet.”** (See Psalm 8:6; also Matthew 28:18-20.)
- See Psalm 8:6; Heb 2:6-8; 1 Cor 15:27. “All things” refers to the whole of creation. Lenski notices that “the idea of subjecting hostile things is not conveyed but only that of ranging all things as a footstool under Christ’s feet” like Matthew 5:35.<sup>15</sup>
- ❖ **“and appointed him to be head over everything for the church.”** The church is the beneficiary of the fact that Christ is the head over everything.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> Foulkes, F. (1989, p. 71).

<sup>14</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 35).

<sup>15</sup> Lenski, R. C. H. (1937, p. 402).

- Ephesians 3:10: “His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms.”<sup>17</sup>
- In this letter to the Ephesians, “church” refers both to the local assembly and congregation and the universal church.
- ❖ **“which is his body”**
  - “body” Bratcher and Nida comment on this figure of speech: “The figure stresses the close, organic, living relationship between Christ and his people. It is not simply a functional, an official relationship, like that of a president to a business organization or of a chairman to a committee, but a relationship of a common life, a mutual, interdependent existence. Of course there is no idea of equality: Christ is the head and the church is subordinate to him.”<sup>18</sup>
  - The church is the visible presence of Christ in this world.
- ❖ **“the fullness of him who fills everything in every way”** Paul uses different words to express the same thought to shed light on this mystery. See
  - Ephesians 2:21, 22; 3:17-19; 4:15, 16; 5:18-20; 5:29, 30. (Also: Col 1:19, 20; 2:9).

## Application

### Be amazed

- ❖ **“That God should set such a high value on a community of sinners, rescued from perdition and still bearing too many traces of their former state, might well seem incredible were it not made clear that he sees them in Christ, as from the beginning he chose them in Christ’.** As a consequence, then, Paul prays that his readers might appreciate the extraordinary value which God places on them. He views them as in his beloved Son and estimates them accordingly. And this is true of all who are ‘in Christ’. Let us, therefore, as Christians realize that God purposes ‘to accomplish his gracious plan through [us] ... as the first fruits of the reconciled universe of the future’. May we live consistently with this high calling (cf. Eph. 4:1) **and accept with gratitude and true humility the grace and glory that he has lavished on us.**<sup>19</sup>

### Praise

- ❖ Praise God the Father who has given faith to sinners.
- ❖ Praise Christ for the love found in the congregation and towards other people.
- ❖ Praise the exalted Christ because he has saved us by his precious blood.

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<sup>16</sup> O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 145).

<sup>17</sup> See also: Arndt, W., Danker, F. W., Bauer, W., & Gingrich, F. W. (2000, p. 303-304).

<sup>18</sup> Bratcher, R. G., & Nida, E. A. (1993, p. 37).

<sup>19</sup> O’Brien, P. T. (1999, p. 136), quoting F.F. Bruce.

- ❖ Praise God the Father and His son Jesus Christ for sending the Holy Spirit into the hearts of man.

### Holy Spirit

- ❖ The Holy Spirit is completely different:
  - “The Holy Spirit is very different from the spirits that are worshipped in traditional religion. He is a person, not just an influence or a force. He cannot be manipulated or placated as spirits are in traditional religions. He is also holy and so cannot be associated with anything unholy or demonic. He helps us know God much more deeply. Without his revelation and wisdom, our knowledge of who God is and what he does for us will be shallow and weak.”<sup>20</sup>
- ❖ The wisdom of the Holy Spirit is the wisdom of the Father and of the Son.
  - “Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!” (Rom 11:33-(36)).
- ❖ The Holy Spirit will reveal the mysteries of the Good News (Eph 1:3-14 and other passages).
  - He will enlighten the eyes of the believer’s heart to know God and Jesus Christ more fully, especially the glory and power of God, and his grace and love (Eph 2:1-10).
  - Personal knowledge of God precedes everything else a man needs!
    - And the Spirit:
      - (1) “the **hope** to which he has **called** you,” (= what God has done);
      - (2) “the riches of his **glorious inheritance** in the saints,” (= what God has promised);
      - (3) “and his **incomparably great power** for us who believe.” (= what God is doing today).

### Strengthen and enlighten

- ❖ Strengthen the people in their faith and love.
- ❖ Identify also the weaknesses.
- ❖ Identify also the blindness that we are not fully aware of our calling, hope, inheritance and the power of God.
- ❖ The necessity of prayer to give thanks for the faith of others, and to remember them.

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<sup>20</sup> Adeyemo, T. (2006, p. 1454).



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