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REALIZING OUR EXALTED PRIVILEGES

Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Illumination: Eph. 1:15-23

¹⁵ Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints,

¹⁶ Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers;

¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

¹⁸ The eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints,

¹⁹ And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,

²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places,

²¹ Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

²² And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church,

²³ Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all.



Ephesians 1

¹ Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus:

Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

⁶ **To the praise of the glory of his grace**, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

⁷ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

⁸ Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

¹¹ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

¹² That we should be **to the praise of his glory**, who first trusted in Christ.

¹³ In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, **unto the praise of his glory.**

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¹⁷ That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him:

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Eph. 1:15-23: Paul's Prayer for Spiritual Illumination

1A. The Occasion of the Prayer: 1:15-16

1b. Their faith:

He did write to the Ephesians, so the faith of which he heard must have been a spiritual manifestation since his departure there.

2b. Their love:

Love is the demonstration of the genuineness of their faith (*pistin*). These are frequent occasions for prayer: faith, hope, love (Philemon 5; Col. 1:4-5; 1 Thess. 1:3; Rom. 1:8).

3b. His prayer life:

1c. Its constancy:

His praying (*pauoma*) shows prayer is continual (present tense); he is praying many times: "pray without ceasing."

2c. Its content:

Giving of thanks (*euchariston*) looks backward, prayers (*proseuchon*) looks forward. "Making mention" is not a peculiarly Christian expression. In a papyrus letter in the British Museum, written in Egypt by a sister to her brother and dated July 24, 172 B.C., we read: "I continue praying to the gods for your welfare. I am well myself, and so is the child, and all in the house, continually making mention of you (i.e. in prayer). When I got your letter immediately I thanked the gods for your welfare. . . ."

Thus "making mention" and "giving of thanks" are part of his prayers.

2A. The Object of the Prayer: 1:17-19a

1b. The preparatory object: 1:17-18a

v. 17 "in order to" v. 18 "with a view to"

Paul is praying for our spiritual illumination so that we might comprehend God's special revelation.

1c. The person addressed:

Paul combines the name or title for God from 1:3 and amplifies it to include “the Father of glory.” In 3:14 the prayer is continued and here the universal authority (fatherhood) of God is mentioned.

2c. The gift requested:

The spirit of wisdom and revelation.

This is not the Holy Spirit because:

- 1) They already have that, Rom. 8:9 “none of his”
- 2) Ephesians 1:13 mentions sealing
- 3) There is no definite article with spirit, thus the term spirit seems to signify a special manifestation or bestowal of the Holy Spirit.

--Wisdom (*sophia*)—mental excellence in its fullest sense

--Knowledge (*epignosis*)—the process of gaining knowledge

--Knowing (*oida*)—looks at the fact of knowing, which may or may not be experiential

What is clear from the above is that illumination is no intellectual process; it begins with the heart.

2b. The progressive object: 1:18b-23

1c. God’s calling in the past: 1:18b

The prayer for wisdom is that the believer have a knowledge of three things. Paul wants his readers and us to see our eternal state so our present life would be in accordance with it.

It is God’s hope, not ours—a reference apparently going back to 1:4.

Calling: “The effectual work of God’s grace in our hearts whereby we were brought into saving union with the Son of God” (Baxter, 168).

2c. God’s inheritance in the future: 1:18c

God wants us to see how great HIS glory is when He inherits us. Hope (1c.) and inheritance are subjective, i.e., what comes to God, not to us (cf. 1:11, 14; Deut. 32:9).

God inherits us and finds glory in this.

1 Cor. 4:5 “So shall every man receive praise of God.”

3c. God’s power in the present: 1:19a-23

“The working. . . which He hath wrought”—both words are emphatic and express the divine activity.

1d. The impressiveness of the power: 1:19

Paul uses four words concerning God’s sovereignty arranged in the following order: 1) *dunamis*: inherent power, 2) *energia*: power in action, 3) *kratos*: from the head, i.e. might, used mostly of God, 4) *ischus*: power, literally the might of his strength.

2d. The illustration of the power: 1:20-23

1e. Resurrection: 1:20a

Christ was the first to be resurrected from the dead. All other resurrections were resuscitations. The people thus resurrected died again.

2e. Ascension: 1:20b

The ascension is not often described (Mk. 16:19; Lk. 24:51; Acts 1:9) but is constantly assumed (e.g. Rom. 8:34; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 1 Pet. 3:22). In the New Testament the cross, resurrection and ascension are three parts of one great act.

3e. Exaltation: 1:20b-21

1f. The significance:

The term “in the heavenlies,” is unique to Ephesians. It speaks of the seat of divine authority in the spiritual sphere. “At his right hand” speaks of a place of:

- 1) honor: being placed above all created ranks
- 2) power: Mt. 26:64
- 3) happiness: Psa. 16:11; Heb. 12:2

2f. The sovereignty:

Christ is sovereign above all—*uperano*. It speaks of His exaltation rather than reigning over these powers.

1g. The interpretation of the powers:

Over whom has the name of Christ been exalted? Several possibilities have been suggested:

- 1h. Satanic realm—used elsewhere of it, but here the context is heavenly, not Christ's victory over the forces of hell.
- 2h. Good angels—used elsewhere, but here the context is glorification of men, not angels.
- 3h. Earthly dignitaries—however, the resurrection and exaltation are not needed to prove Christ's superiority over them.
- 4h. Every form of authority in every realm.

2g. The identification of the powers:

- 1h. Principality:
Ruler, usually used of the angelic realm; (in Col. 1:16—3 of the 4 terms are used).
- 2h. Power:
Delegated authority, possibly demons.
- 3h. Might/Dominion:
The power of natural man.
- 4h. Lordship:
Anyone claiming deity or the place of supreme leadership.

4e. Dominion: 1:22-23

These verses are a quotation from Psalm 8:6, referring to Christ's millennial reign.

The final sphere of Christ's power is the Church.

1f. His enthronement over all things: 1:22a

He and no other (*auton*) is emphatic—
22b. The true man of Psalm 8 took over where Adam failed. Hebrews 2:5-10 is the inspired commentary on Psalm 8.

2f. His headship over the Church: 1:22b-23

Christ's authority is
 celestial—over the heavens
 terrestrial—over the earth
 ecclesiastical—over the Church

Verse 23 "which is his body, namely, the fullness of him. . ." Fullness is in apposition to his body. The meaning is: although Christ is over the Church, He is incomplete without it. A head needs a body.

Verse 23b: "(Christ) is filled with all things in all." The term filled is passive, which means the Church is a completion of Christ.

- 1) The Church is His fullness and yet
- 2) The Church is the fullness of Christ without which He is incomplete.

All these things fill up Christ, but the Church is the final fullness.

Summary

The message title is "Realizing Our Exalted Privileges." The Apostle Paul, in his matchless prayer, asked that we might realize three things: the fact that we are God's hope. He selected us to be His very own in eternity past (Eph. 1:4). We are God's inheritance in the future. He wants us to see how great His glory is. We need to realize God's power in the present. His power is absolute and we weak human beings need to realize that with the indwelling trinity, we possess the power of the triune God to face and overcome difficulties. The prayer concludes with the fact that God is in perfect control over everything and everyone in heaven and on earth and He wants to be in control of His body, the Church, His beloved Bride for whom He is even now constructing a home in heaven, the New Jerusalem.

THE BELIEVER'S EXALTED PRIVILEGES—
None is exempted

1 Timothy 1:3	AT EPHESUS	INDIVIDUALS IN THIS CHURCH
Eph. 6:9	Masters	
Eph. 5:25-37	Husbands	
Eph. 5:22-24	Wives	
Eph. 6:4	Fathers	
Eph. 6:1-3	Children	
Eph. 6:8c	Servants (workers/employees)	
Eph. 6:8c	Slaves	

Ephesians 1:18-19

How much did God love us in the past?

How delighted will He be when He receives us to glory?

How much power and enablement is available to us now?