

# Ephesians

## Ephesians 1:18 - The hope he called us to

What a delight for Paul to be able to say, “All over the world this gospel is producing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth,” **Colossians 1:6**.

So there’s real noticeable “fruit” when God’s grace is understood. Into one’s life come “faith and love,” **verse 5** - “faith in Christ Jesus,” **verse 4**, and “love for all the saints.” And those same two fruits stood out in both Colossae and Ephesus - exactly as the Father had planned, because this is what is supposed to happen when people “hear the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation,” **Ephesians 1:13**.

And here it was happening in the same identical fashion in two separate groups of people in two different cities. It was an amazing and undeniable phenomenon - and Paul was thrilled, because what he’d been teaching was obviously doing wonderful things to people, that were so opposite and so different to the culture they were living in too.

And that stirred Paul to pray. Pray first of all to the source of these amazing transformations in people, thanking God for such wonderful things happening (**verse 16**). And then pray that the Father would become just as real to the Ephesians as he was to Paul himself, and by the same way that Paul had come to know the Father too - through the “wisdom and revelation” provided by the Holy Spirit (**verse 17**). And now a third thing he prays for in **verse 18**, “that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know **the hope to which he has called you**, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”

There are three parts in that prayer to expand on - first of all, what the “eyes of our hearts being enlightened” means; secondly, what is “the hope he has called us to,” and thirdly, what is “his glorious inheritance in the saints”?

Taking into account too, that because Paul is praying for these things they are so obviously what we need. And also because Paul said, “I keep asking” in **verse 17**, so these things were on Paul’s mind a lot, and they constantly came to mind when he was thinking about the Ephesian church. This is what he wanted them to see, and what all his teaching had been directed toward, and now his prayers as well.

And first of all, it was “the eyes of their hearts being enlightened.” It was their “hearts,” note, not their minds. Paul had already opened their minds to God’s incredible plan that he’s working through his Son to complete; but opening their eyes and minds was just the start. The Father wants hearts to come alive too, where things light up for us as they did for Paul, who couldn’t stop thanking the Father for what he’d set up. It was like living in a world of constant light, with brilliant flashes of inspiration and understanding coming to him all the time, and especially when he could see those flashes lighting up the lives of the Ephesians too.

And by now Paul knew the process. First of all, get “the word of truth, the gospel of our salvation” to people and get it thoroughly understood. Which is what he did in Ephesus. He did running discussions in the synagogue for three months “arguing persuasively about the kingdom of God.” He went into detail, and welcomed discussion.

But when some refused to reason with him and shouted him down, claiming it was all nonsense, Paul switched to a different location for daily discussions for two more years (Acts 19:8-10). That’s 730 lessons he did on what we’ve only spent 13 lessons on in Ephesians so far. So these people’s **eyes had been thoroughly opened** to the entirely new realm of the Kingdom of God now in operation on the Earth, in which they were now playing their part too.

So they were in probably the same spot we are in now, as we too read and discuss what Paul wrote in verses 3-14. And maybe it’s opened our eyes too, that there’s a whole lot more going on in our lives because of what our Father has provided for us in his Son. But Paul realizes this went beyond teaching, listening and discussing; it involved an “enlightening of the heart,” **verse 18**.

And this didn’t come through Paul teaching, it came through Paul praying. Because he started off **verse 18** with “I pray also,” which is interesting because why the need for prayer when he’d done all that teaching already? Wasn’t the teaching enough? I mean, give these Ephesians an exam paper with questions on what Paul had taught them over the years, and they would probably have done quite well. And their report card showed high grades when it came to faith in Jesus and love for all the saints too.

So what more did they need? Well, their eyes had been opened, but they also needed their hearts enlightened - in such a way, Paul continues in **verse 18**, “that you may **know the hope** to which he has called you.” And know it not just in their minds but through the “wisdom and revelation of the Holy Spirit,” **verse 17**.

This was something else God had in store for them, that after learning what the gospel was all about, the Spirit would concentrate on making hope come alive. The same thing had happened in the Colossian church. All that faith and love they too were experiencing had **“sprung from the hope stored up for them in heaven,” Colossians 1:5**. Here was proof they were experiencing spiritual blessings in the heavenly realms, because hope was straight out of the storehouse of heaven, and once that was **“enlightened in their hearts”** the other blessings followed.

So it was hope that got things rolling, which Paul knew, which is why he was praying the Ephesians' hearts would light up with the same hope too - because teaching alone wouldn't do it. Even a man as dedicated and knowledgeable as Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 2:3-5**, that **“I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.”** Because **“no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him, but God revealed it to us by his Spirit,” verses 9-10**. **“No mind,”** note, can grasp what our hope is, because it's only by **“the Spirit from God that we understand (or our hearts are enlightened to) what God has freely given us,” verse 12**.

So I can't talk you into being inspired by what God has called us to and prepared for us. Nor could Paul. But through his teaching the word of truth and the gospel of salvation, **it laid the groundwork** for the Ephesians to receive **“the promised Holy Spirit,”** and it was the Spirit that then gave them **“hope in Christ,” Ephesians 1:12**.

Studying God's word, then, whether it's privately or together, is what lays the groundwork for the Holy Spirit to really bring to light what the Father has prepared for us in his Son, because that's what gives us hope. And hope is what we need, because we aren't experiencing the fullness of what God has prepared for us yet. He's given us a peek through the Holy Spirit deposit, giving us a taste of it now, which is why Paul could speak of being **“saved by hope”** in **Romans 8:24**, because **the taste is what gives us hope of the fullness** that's coming to us later. It's what **“saves”** us - keeps us going - when life here is anything but a taste of what God has prepared for humanity.

The author of Hebrews knew that too, which is why he wrote, **“Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful,” Hebrews 10:23**. Hold on tight and never let go, because the Father will be true to his word. The fullness he promised will be ours, so let that hope we have **“motivate us to encouraging and helping each other,” verse 24**.

And who wouldn't like to have that kind of unswerving hope when dark clouds are gathering and life holds little hope as the lunacy of evil grows and depraved people turn the world upside down and turn us against each other, and strike at the very heart of Christian belief to destroy it? It's only hope given us by the Spirit that can save us and keep us positive in such times, instead of curling up in a ball of depression and hopelessness.

Which is why we get our noses into God's word, because in doing that we know the Holy Spirit kicks in with power, love and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). And especially when we're praying for the Spirit to do that for each other too, just as Paul was, because, like him, we know that it's only the Spirit who can make God and his promises real for us. Studying starts the ball rolling, yes, but the Spirit is the one who gives it momentum and speed.

With a Spirit enlightened heart, then, we "do not lose heart" in our physical existence now. As Paul wrote in **2 Corinthians 4:16-17** - "Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison."

Amazing: Paul viewed the mess of this life as a "slight momentary affliction." Not bad for a man who'd been beaten with rods three times, thirty-nine lashes five times, shipwrecked three times, stoned so bad he was left for dead, spent sleepless nights and many a day without food or drink, and lived in constant danger on sea and land, and from opposition in the churches too - but considered it all just a temporary blip.

Because this is what God has given us the Holy Spirit for, to enlighten the eyes of our hearts to seeing what we go through now as just a temporary blip too. But why include so much suffering, frustration and temptation, though? Why leave us in a world that really makes life difficult at times? Well, this is where the Spirit opens the eyes of our hearts again, this time to help us see that what happens to us now is also "**preparing us,**" **verse 17**, for what we're going to receive in full later.

None of what we're going through here, then, is wasted. Somehow, in one way or another, the God we've come to love for the amazing plan he has for us, is "working out everything for our good," **Romans 8:28** - because that's the purpose he called us to now. Which is why we're "being renewed every day" by the Spirit, so that every day something is being put in place, like bricks in a building, to shape us more and more into the kind of people God can proudly call his children. So wake up to that hope every morning: that today will be another brick in that building.