

THE INFINITE IMPORTANCE OF ILLUMINATION

Ephesians 1:15-23

Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; 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: 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, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, 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: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fullness of him that fills all in all.

The publishers of my Bible have added editorial paragraph summaries to the text of Scripture, attempting to help the reader discern the theme of the coming paragraph in each instance. Just before the text recorded above, they added the explanatory words, "A Prayer for Knowledge and Understanding." This assessment is reasonable accurate. I believe these words to contain the most important single prayer that any human being can pray for any other human being at any time. I simply do not believe that it is possible to pray a more important prayer for yourself or for any other human being.

Notice the mood that Paul was in when he prayed this prayer. The word "wherefore" (verse 15) indicates that he was in a very *thoughtful* mood. The word "wherefore" is a connecting word. When we read such a word in a text of Scripture, we should ask, "What is the *wherefore therefore?*" In this case, the answer is absolutely overwhelming. When we inquire about the preceding thoughts and words, we discover that the Apostle Paul has just written *the greatest single sentence ever written*. It is an incredibly long sentence. So long, in fact, that it probably would not pass any grammatical structure test in any classroom on earth. But remember, Paul is not interested in grammar; he is only interested in grace! As far as I know and have been able to research, this is the longest sentence ever recorded in literature. The sentence is *twelve verses long* in the Biblical text, and some of the verses are lengthy by themselves! Paul has just written a celebration, a kind of hymn, of the Christian understanding of the grace of God. He has just verbally celebrated grace as the source, the reason, the cause, the producer, of our salvation.

The written celebration (verses 3-14) is divided obviously into three parts. The first part is made up of verses three through six, and ends with the refrain, "To the praise of the glory of His grace." The second "stanza" is made of verses seven through twelve, and ends with the chorus, "That we should be to the praise of His glory." And the third stanza is comprised of verses thirteen and fourteen, and ends with the refrain, "Unto the praise of His glory." So the hymn has three stanzas, and they all end with essentially the same chorus.

The respective themes of the three stanzas are a delight to explore. The subject of the first stanza is the work of *God the Father* in accomplishing our redemption. And the "smaller" subjects in this stanza are fathomless. Paul writes of such things as "the heavenly places," "election,"

holiness, justification, the love of God, "predestination," "adoption," and the will and pleasure of God. No wonder his mind is soaring when he comes to our text. But he goes higher yet before he records the prayer of our text.

The subject of the second stanza is the work of *Jesus the Son of God* in securing our salvation. Such terms as "redemption," "his blood," "the forgiveness of sins," "the riches of His grace," His abounding wisdom and prudence, and the inheritance we have in Christ, comprise the themes of this second stanza. Paul's soul seems to soar right out of prose into spiritual poetry! He ascends the ladder of the stars as his spirit explodes in celebration, yet he is solid and deliberate in his verbal expression of these great treasures.

Stanza three presents the work of *the Holy Spirit of God* in securing our redemption. After Paul has given the order of the "saving steps," he writes about the Holy Spirit as a "seal" and an "earnest" in applying and protecting our salvation. He says, "you heard the word of truth, the Gospel of your salvation," and "you believed and trusted in Him," and then you were "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise," and given "the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession." And remember, the truths of these three packed stanzas form one single sentence. I say again: It is the greatest single sentence ever written! Paul ponders these great things, and then writes them down. No wonder he is in a thoughtful mood, and no wonder it leads him to pray this prayer for spiritual understanding. It is possible even to hear and read about such truths as this -and be absolutely sterile of understanding. But Paul is mystical and meditative in heart and thoughtful in mind as he ponders and presents these great truths.

Then, Paul is in a *thrilled* mood, also. He says to the Ephesian Christians, "I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." What a testimony! What a tribute to the Ephesian Christians! There is no pastor on earth who would not be absolutely ecstatic with joy and celebration *if* he could see these two things proliferating among his people - "faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints." Note several things. Note the word, "Lord," in referring to Jesus. The Ephesian Christians did not fragment Jesus into parts which could be dealt with separately. They had received a whole Christ to match their whole need. They did not think of dealing with Jesus as Savior at one time, and as Lord at another. They had "faith in the Lord Jesus."

And note the order of the two features of Christian experience which are mentioned. "Faith in the Lord Jesus" preceded "love unto all the saints." These two features have a cause and effect relationship in the Christian life. They are mutually inclusive and mutually exclusive in the Christian life. If one is present, they both will be. If one is absent, they both will be. Only the person who *is rightly related to the Lord by faith will be rightly related to others in love*. Faith in the Lord Jesus always leads to love unto all the saints. The presence of one indicates the presence of the other. Faith is the vertical relationship of the Christian life, and love is the horizontal relationship of it. So Paul is thrilled as he celebrates with the Ephesians the abundance of these things in their lives.

And Paul is in a *thankful* mood, also. He writes, "I cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers." The Greek word translated, "I give thanks" ("eucharisteo") is used twenty-three times by Paul, and only 14 times in the rest of the New Testament. *What a statistic!* Here is one of the gigantic secrets of Paul's incredible Christian life and influence. While

everybody else thought, planned, prayed, and lived the Christian life *for themselves*, Paul's constant thought and conduct was *for you*. " While they lived "outside-in," Paul lived "*inside-out*," *always toward someone else*. He was constantly praying and thanking God *for others*.

What an introduction to the greatest of all possible prayers! Paul was in a *thoughtful, thrilled, and thankful* mood.

1. THE SEQUENCE OF THE REQUEST, VERSES 3-14

First, we will look at the sequence, or spiritual progression, which is climaxed by this great prayer. Note again the "wherefore" of verse 15. What is the "wherefore" *therefore*? Paul has been straining at the leash of language, piling words on top of words, and all superlatives, to tell us that all that God is - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - is totally implicated in our total salvation. So the great truth of the Trinity is on high profile in verses three through fourteen. The doctrine of the Trinity is a high and holy mystery, just like God is. But it is a vital and indispensable mystery. The idea of the trinity is far more relevant than we can imagine.

A book like Great Expectations, for example, may be regarded as a *trinity*. First, there was the essential idea in the mind of Charles Dickens. Nobody else knew the ideas at the beginning, apart from perhaps friends with whom he might share some of his ideas. Great Expectations thus existed as *concept*. But then, the book was published, and you could hold a copy in your hand and say, "This is Great Expectations." Now you have a manifestation or a concrete expression of the concept that continues to exist in the author's mind. Thus, you now have *two* Great Expectations, each of them distinct from the other, but both of them may be described as being Great Expectations. Finally, people read the book, grasp the concept, and may seek to put it into practice. Now, you have a *third* Great Expectations, this time in practice. The concept still exists, the book still exists, but now the concept manifested in the book finds *realization*. I bear personal testimony at this point. When I read Dickens' great novel, I saw that all fleshly and selfish expectations must be refined into gentleness and unselfishness, and that this likely takes place only through a process of suffering. So the author's idea, published in a book, became a means of insight and change in my life. Notice that all three have to exist - the book in *conception*, the book in *publication*, and the book in *action*. Any two would be insufficient by themselves. You must have a trinity.

A trinity is found in everything. In everything, there is a hidden inner nature (the *inner essence*), an exterior form (the *outward expression*), and a result (the *ongoing effect*). Suppose that I hold in my hand a fountain pen; suppose that you also hold (your own) fountain pen in your hand. Suppose that mine is a Parker and yours is a Schaeffer. They have the same *inner essence* in that they both are fountain pens. But they have a different *outward expression* in that each has the distinctive manufacturers form and trademark. And they both have an *ongoing effect* - you can write or mark with them. In fact, I could use my pen to sign my name on a piece of paper, mail the paper to central Africa, and the pen might still be held in my hand in Memphis, Tennessee. Understanding the limits of any finite illustration in addressing infinite truth, the inner essence of God is *God the Father*; the outward expression of God is *God the Son*, and the ongoing effect of God is the work of *God the Holy Spirit*.

Salvation has been called "the house that Grace built." The *Architect* who provided the blueprint was God the Father; the *Contractor* who has purchased and supplied all the materials is God the Son; and the *Carpenter and Builder, the Constructor* who makes all applications to "materialize" the Finished Product, is the Holy Spirit.

Horace Bushnell was a teacher at Yale University before he became a famous preacher. Later he wrote, "When the preacher touches the mystery of the Divine Trinity and logic shatters it all to pieces, I'm glad I have a heart as well as a head. My heart wants the Father; my heart wants the Son; my heart wants the Holy Spirit - and one just as much as the other. The Bible has a Divine Trinity for me; my heart says that I need that Trinity - and I mean to hold by my heart." Give careful attention to the word "heart" in this statement. I have just completed the reading of a book by Peter Kreeft entitled, Heaven, the Heart's Deepest Longing. In his book, the author says, "Our desires go far deeper than our imagination or our thought; the heart is deeper than the mind." Blaise Pascal, the French philosophical genius, said, "The heart has reasons that reason knows not of." We must learn to trust the innate, natural, God-implanted instincts of the heart. When these are taught by Scripture, we find the deepest needs within us addressed and met through the truth and work of the Divine Trinity.

So the Apostle Paul has just celebrated the truth of the Trinity, and has shown us his mood as he ponders it and the Ephesian Christians. Now, he will record the prayer he prays for them in light of this great celebration. Remember the marginal title: "A Prayer for Knowledge and Understanding." Actually, it is a prayer for spiritual illumination. And what an incredible prayer it is.

II. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ILLUMINATION, VERSE 18

Next, we will attempt to see the significance of spiritual illumination, which is the subject of this great prayer. The effectiveness of any truth in our lives depends on our apprehension or understanding of it. If a truth only "sits there neatly arranged on the shelf," it won't move us very far.

Television has a "Discovery Channel," but the Bible is the greatest "discovery channel" in the world. But just as a TV set must be turned on, tuned in, and flooded with light for us to appreciate what the Discovery Channel reveals, so it is in our relationship with the Bible. *It is not possible for the unaided human mind, regardless of its natural brilliance, to understand the mind of God in Scripture without the miracle of Divine illumination.* Note this carefully; it is an absolute dogma. *There is no understanding of the mind of God at any time without the miracle of illumination!*

A family was entertaining another family of friends in their home for an evening of food and fellowship. After a good meal, they were all seated in the family den, visiting. The little four year old was playing quietly with toys in the floor. There was a lull in the conversation, and the four year-old spoke into the silence, repeated something he had heard his older brother say as he was reciting his arithmetic assignment. "Two times two is four," the little boy said thoughtlessly. Suddenly, everyone gasped when they heard this erudite recitation from a four-year-old. The mother just knew that they had a child genius! She said proudly, "What did you say, dear? Say it again." The little boy, surprised at the attention he was receiving, said, "Two times two is four." And the two families expressed their amazement that a child so young could know so much. But

suddenly, while they were discussing his brilliance, he interrupted and said, "Mommy, *what's a two?* " You see, he had *information without illumination*, and this is precisely the problem with most of us.

Many of the sophisticated cameras of today have two shutters. One covers the lens, the other covers the film. To open one is to prepare the camera for use. To open the other is to snap the immediate picture. *The one corresponds to the new birth, the other to illumination.* The new birth is only the beginning. It gives the spiritual eyes, and prepares them for use. Thereafter, we need accurate understanding of every "immediate picture" that God brings before us. And this ongoing understanding comes to the individual exactly the same way the new birth comes - by a miracle of Almighty God produced in the heart of the person. John Calvin said, "Illumination is like a pair of spectacles. Without it, our visions may be blurred, but with it, we can see clearly."

The Psalmist said, "In Thy light shall we see light." Go into a great cathedral at night. You can't see the astounding beauty of the windows because of the absence of the light. Go again at noon. The light makes the windows show their splendor. You had the power of sight before, but no light. What the sun is to those windows, the Holy Spirit is to the student of the Word of God. To see, we must have *both sight and light*. If we have sight but no light, we cannot see. But if we have light but no sight, we still cannot see. Both sight and light are indispensable for us to see.

A policeman saw a man crawling around on his hands and knees under a street light, searching with his hands through the grass. The policeman approached, spoke to the man, and discovered that he was drunk. "What are you looking for?" the policeman asked. "I lost my wallet," the drunk man replied. The policeman joined the pitiful drunk and began searching with him. After a considerable time of fruitless search, the discouraged policeman asked, "Sir, are you sure you lost the wallet here?" "Why, of course not," mumbled the drunk. "I lost it back down the street." "What!" exclaimed the policeman, "Then why are you looking for it here?" "Because there ain't no light back there!" the drunk sighed. Whatever his folly, his reasoning was accurate. You need light as well as sight in order to see. At the new birth, God issues to his newborn child a "new set of eyes." Then, at each occurrence of illumination, he turns on the light so those eyes can see clearly. So this prayer of Paul is crucial if we are to understand the things of God.

Only God can reveal God! There are three indispensable factors in God's Divine disclosure of Himself: 1. Revelation (some call it "manifestation"), in which God discloses Himself; 2. Inspiration - the *recording* of revelation; and 3. Illumination. Revelation and Inspiration are objective; Illumination is subjective.

Unaided intelligence gives you your point of view; illumination gives you God's point of view.

III. THE SOURCE OF ILLUMINATION, VERSE 17a, b.

Next, Paul identifies the nature and source of illumination. Verse eighteen uses the word "heart." The King James Bible translates it "understanding," but the Greek word is "kardia," from which we get our word, "cardiac." This does not merely refer to man's intellectual understanding. It refers to "the eyes of the heart." Misguided by our everyday use of the word, we have forgotten that *in the Bible, "heart" means every area and function of the personality.* H.

Wheeler Robinson, an outstanding Bible scholar, analyzed the various senses in the Hebrew and Greek words for "heart" are used. Here is the result of his analysis.

Sense	Old Testament	New Testament
Personality	257	33
Emotional State	166	19
Intellectual Activity	204	23
Volition	195	22

So the word "heart" in the Bible refers to every area and function of the human personality. Paul uses a remarkable phrase in Ephesians 1:18: "the eyes of your *heart*." So every believer has two pairs of eyes. One pair is in his head, and the other pair is in his heart. He received the eyes in his head at physical birth, and he received the eyes of his heart at spiritual birth. But just as the eyes of his head must be trained and developed after birth for proper use, the eyes of the heart must be trained and developed after the new birth. Our hearts have eyes by which we are to see (all things) from the depths of our personality. But this "seeing" requires spiritual illumination.

Paul reveals the *source* of this illumination of the heart in verse 17. He tells the Ephesians that he is praying for them, "That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation." "Wisdom" is the *understanding and appropriation* of Divine truth. "Revelation" is the disclosure, the "unveiling," of God and His truth. Note the order of these words in the text. Why this order? You might expect that revelation would be mentioned first, then wisdom, but such is not the case. In Genesis one, God created light before He created the material universe. Why? Because, no matter how many worlds He created, no matter how many eyes He made, there would have been no sight without light. The same is true in spiritual experience. He gives wisdom with which to understand (the *means* to see), then He begins to bring His revelation (the *thing* to see) before us.

IV. THE SUBJECT OF ILLUMINATION, VERSE 17c

The subject of this illumination is "the knowledge of Him." There are three kinds of knowledge: 1. "I - it" knowledge, which we may call *scientific* knowledge; 2. "I - you" knowledge, which we may call *social* knowledge; and 3. "I - Thou" knowledge, which we may call *spiritual* knowledge. The *basic, ultimate, eternal* knowledge is *relational knowledge*, one's knowledge of God, himself, and others. This is reflected in the "great commandment," the duty to "love God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength," and the second great commandment, which is to "love your neighbor as yourself."

The greatest knowledge of all is the knowledge of God through His Son, Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus said, "This is life eternal, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, Whom Thou hast sent" (John 17:3). *To know God personally is salvation; to know God progressively is sanctification; and to know God perfectly is glorification.*

"Ready information is everywhere; Relation insight is all too rare. "

V. THE SUBSTANCE OF ILLUMINATION, VERSES 18b-23

Now we come to the most incredible part of the prayer. Now we will see why this matter of illumination is so vital and urgent. Verse 18 says that the purpose of this illumination, or "heart seeing," is "that you may know." The word "know" is "oida," which is distinctively *not* the word for intellectual or academic knowing, the knowing you do by the use of your mind, your brain, your reason, your intelligence. The word "oida" means *"to know by seeing."* This is the intuitive spiritual seeing of the heart, and requires that the eyes of the heart be opened and flooded with Divine light, a miracle of the Holy Spirit. When this occurs, *a blind person can accurately say, "Oh, I see!"* Helen Keller was likely referring to this when she said, "I would rather be blind the way I am blind, and see the way I see, than to see the way many people do, and be blind the way they are blind." Think over these words carefully. A reporter asked Miss Keller, "Is there anything worse than to be without organic sight?" She quickly replied, "Oh, yes, there is one thing much worse, and that is to have *sight without vision.*" But remember, true vision is an absolute miracle of God!

And what does the illumined person "know by seeing"? Verses 18 and 19 have been called "the prayer of the three `whats.'" When the eyes of my heart are opened by a miracle of God, I discover that: 1. I don't have to *protect* myself - because God has provided perfect *security* for me; 2. I don't have to *prove* myself - because God has provided perfect *significance* for me; and 3. I don't have to *provide* for myself - because God has supplied perfect *sufficiency* for me. These insights are conveyed through the three "what" clauses of verses 18 and 19. We will now attempt to examine and explain the content of these three "what" clauses. These three "whats," these three objects of the prayer for illumination are *the greatest and most vital areas of human life*, and the answer to this prayer *solves the three greatest problems in a believer's life.*

A man is lost in a forest. He is in darkness and danger. A storm shatters the silence, and the lightning illumines the darkness. *The fool will look at the lightning; the wise man will look at the road that lies illuminated before him.* The quest for illumination has its own peculiar and massive dangers - the dangers of egocentricity and superiority - the dangers of diabolical pride. Psalm 119:130 says, "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple." So we must ask God for this "simplicity" of heart and spirit, and for the proper "entrance of His words" into our minds and hearts, and *for the light that will enable us to see and appreciate these three incredible "whats."*

The telescope was "accidentally" discovered by a Dutch spectacle maker. Spectacle making involves handling lenses which need to be checked and this involves looking through them. It was during such an examination that the spectacle maker found himself looking through not one, but two lenses. To his surprise the magnification of the lens combination was much greater than that of a single lens. In placing the two lenses at opposite ends of a tube, the telescope was invented. Again, the "accident" "happened" to a careful and diligent researcher (!!). In spiritual matters, the "serendipities," or "happy surprises" ("accidents"?!), happen to the diligent researchers, also. The two indispensable ingredients are *heart-hunger* and humility. John Baillie wisely said, "I am sure that the bit of the road that most requires to be illuminated is *the point where it forks.*" Much damage is done in the community of believers because we rush ahead

roughly and crudely, without illumination, at the forks of the road - the forks of dispositional differences, doctrinal differences, etc. So we must approach this great territory boldly, but *humbly*.

First, Paul prays that God may open the eyes of the heart and flood them with light, so that the Christian may know by seeing "*what is the hope of his calling.*" At first glance, these words sound so very innocent. They evoke a yawn and a "Ho, hum." But once you examine them thoroughly and carefully, you see why the reader needs illumination. This is a vast treasure, but it appears at first glance to be of little worth. There are two words which require attention and definition and interpretation. One is the word "hope," the other is the word "calling." In both cases, *these words do not mean in the New Testament what we mean when we use them in everyday conversation today.* For example, consider the word, "calling." Today, a "calling" is an inviting, or a vocation. But in the New Testament, the word "calling" is the all-inclusive word for Divine salvation. So we see immediately that this first "what" is infinitely bigger than it first appeared to be. Then consider the word, "hope." Again, the word is vastly bigger and more meaningful than even our big word "hope." To us, hope is wish-projection, or wishful thinking. It is the desire for something projected into the future. But in the New Testament, the word "hope" has another dimension to it. It is identified in the New Testament as "*a sure and certain hope.*" So there is no degree of uncertainty in the New Testament use of the word, "hope." But uncertainty is a very significant part of our modern word "hope." So the New Testament word would be accurately translated, "guarantee," or "assurance." Eureka! What a serendipity this is!

So the prayer of Paul is that the eyes of the believer's heart will be opened up and flooded with light, in order that He may "know by seeing" *how absolutely guaranteed his salvation is.* Think of this: It is God's intention that every believer have absolute, unconditional, *perfect assurance of His salvation.* Do you see now why I earlier said that *the believer no longer has to prove himself, because God has provided perfect, inviolable, invulnerable, invincible security for him!* The reason for this is vital. *Only secure people will ever serve God. Insecure people cannot serve God; they must serve themselves, seeking the security that eludes them outside of Christ.* Every person outside of Christ is a nobody seeking to make of himself a somebody, but every person in Christ (though many don't know it) *is everything to the most important Person in the universe; thus, he can easily volunteer to be nothing, because he cannot lose what he has in Christ. Once he is truly in Christ, he is perfectly secure!* So this prayer is a petition that each Christian will realize His *perfect security* in Christ. But look around you. It is easy to see that most Christians (yes, truly born-again people) act regularly out of insecurity instead of security. Why? Because the first "what" has never been deeply and richly illuminated to the eyes of their hearts. Is this an important prayer - or what?

Now, look at the second "what" in this prayer. Paul prays that the eyes of your heart may be flooded with light, that ye may "know by seeing *what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints.*" Again, careful consideration must be given to the words, and Divine illumination must disclose their meaning to our hearts (see II Timothy 2:7). Question: what "inheritance" is being considered here? Be very careful. Our first tendency would be to answer: The believer's inheritance in Christ, or what I received when I became a Christian. But that is not what the verse says! In fact, the believer's inheritance in Christ has already been discussed in the preceding verses of Ephesians one (verse eleven). No, the inheritance here is *God's inheritance in the saints!* You see, Christ and His estate are the believer's inheritance, but *the Christian is God's inheritance.* Study the Old Testament, and note how many, many times His people are identified

as God's "portion," God's "lot," God's "treasure," God's "inheritance." This is the idea here. Christians are God's inheritance, God's *treasure*. From God's viewpoint, He came into possession of something extremely valuable when He saved you.

So what did God get when He got you? Can you believe it? *He says that He got rich!* Paul speaks of the "riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints." You, dear Christian, are *God's precious treasure*. Now, the Christian who looks at himself and thinks only with his own mind will say, "You gotta be kidding! I am the most worthless creature in the universe. The God who would become rich by getting me must not have much of an inventory!" But again, we must put on the lenses of Heaven. We must think with the mind of God. We must see with the eyes of Christ.

Just how much is a Christian really worth, anyway? Are you ready to get blown clean away? Every Christian on earth is *exactly equivalent in value to Jesus Christ Himself - in God's eyes!* How do we know that? Because *that is exactly what God paid for me - Jesus Christ Himself!* Now, none of us could make the claim that we are inherently as valuable as Jesus is. And if we made such a claim, nobody would believe us. But this is the whole point. The value referred to here is *conferred value*, not mere inherent value.

Suppose that I am very, very rich. I assure you, that is a supposition! Then suppose that you own a grocery store. That, also, is likely a supposition. Then suppose that I walk into your store today and say to you, "I have come in to buy a Classic Coke - and I am prepared to pay twelve million dollars for it." What should you do? Certainly! Ask me if I would be interest in a six-pack of Cokes at the same rate, or an entire case of Cokes! As stupid as the illustration is, it enables us to consider a vital truth. The value of an article is not determined by the price-tag that appears on it on the shelf; it is determined *by the willingness and capability of the purchaser*. When God showed Himself willing and able to pay Jesus Christ to purchase me to Himself, He conferred upon me an unbelievable value. Ephesians 1:14 refers to the believer as God's "purchased possession," and verse seven tells us that the price of purchase was the life, yes, the *death*, the *blood*, of Jesus Christ Himself. So God has conferred on every Christian the exact value of Jesus Himself.

Several years ago a painting entitled *Iris* by Vincent van Gogh sold for \$53.9 million. Now the canvas and paint were barely worth \$10 by today's standards, yet Alan Bond, an Australian financier, was willing to pay an incredible for this work of art. Yes, incredible!

At another auction, Pablo Picasso's *Acrobat and Young Harlequin* was bought for \$38.46 million. It was purchased by a Japanese buyer who became quite emotional over the acquisition. Well, I would have gotten emotional, too, but for an altogether different reason! The buyer was so excited to have this wonderful masterpiece that he paid that vast price without questioning it.

Would you think any differently of yourself if someone very famous and important regarded you as a treasure of incalculable value, like a great work of art, a masterpiece? Dear Christian, that is the you God sees! Ephesians 2:10 says, "You are God's workmanship." The word is "poiema," a *work of art*, a *masterpiece!*

But wait a minute! Isn't God looking through blind eyes when He confers such worth on someone like me? Is God realistic when He buys me at the cost of Jesus? Remember, dear friend,

that this is *conferred* worth. By the transaction of purchase, God confers on you the value of Jesus. But God is certainly not stupid. He knows that you are not inherently as valuable as Jesus. So He confers on you the value of Jesus by the purchase of Calvary - and *then, in order to justify His investment, He sets out immediately after you come into His possession to make you like Jesus!* What a *Gospel* this is!

Suppose you inherit a gold mine. You're absolutely elated. You love that gold mine. But the first time you go out to inspect your new treasure, the gold says to you, "How can you possibly love me? I'm all dirty. I'm all mixed up with that awful iron ore, and I have that filthy clay all over me. I'm contaminated with all kinds of alloys and mineral deposits. I'm ugly and worthless." "Oh, but I do love you," you reply to the gold. You see, I understand what you can become. I know you have all these imperfections, but I have plans for you. I am not going to leave you the way you are now. I am going to purify you. I am going to get rid of all that other stuff. I see your real worth, though it only appears now as potential. I know that the alloys and mineral deposits are not the true you - you are just temporarily mixed up with them. I warn you, it won't be easy. You will go through a lot of heat and pressure. But look at this piece of gold jewelry. Isn't it beautiful? That's what you are. Left to yourself, you would remain in this dark place, buried in the dirty ore. But I know how to change you from what you are now to what you can be. *I will make you beautiful, and you will make me rich!* "Now, dear Christian, read the second "what" again, being sure to put on the "God-glasses" of illumination first.

Do you see why I earlier said that *I don't have to prove myself any longer, because God has provided me with perfect significance*. I am His cherished treasure! So this prayer is a petition that each Christian will realize his *personal significance* in Christ.

Now, we come at last to the final "what" of Paul's prayer. "I pray that the eyes of your heart might be flooded with light, that you may know by seeing *what is the exceeding greatness of God's power toward us who believe*. " So the third "what" of this prayer has to do with personal sufficiency. It has to do with "God's power" in our lives. Paul shows that this power is *defined* power (verse 19) and *demonstrated* power (verses 20-23). In defining God's power that is to be operable in our daily lives, Paul uses four words in verse nineteen. He speaks of "the exceeding greatness (the word means to "throw immeasurably beyond," a picture of great magnitude) of God's power toward us who believe, according to the working of God's mighty power." One word for power in this verse is the Greek word, "dunamis", from which we get our English word "dynamic." This word essentially means capability or potential. A second is the word "energeia," which gives us our words "energy" and "energize." This word means effective or operational power. A third word is "kratos," which refers to power that is exercised in resistance or control. And the final word is "ischuos," which indicates inherent, vital power. So again, Paul strains at the leash of vocabulary to show us how great is the character dynamic that is available to the believer in Christ.

But Paul doesn't stop with mere words which define God's power. He also points to certain events which *demonstrate God's power*. You see, when the Bible wants to impress us with the *love* of God, it points us to the Cross of Christ. When it wants to impress us with the *power* of God, it points us to the Resurrection and Exaltation of Christ. So Paul says that God's power was "wrought in Christ" when God *enlivened Him from the dead* and *exalted Him in glory*. In his words, this power was wrought in Christ "when God raised Him from the dead, and set Him at

His own right hand in the heavenly places, 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, and has put all things under His feet, and made Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His Body, the fullness of Him that fills all in all." So He declares that the same power which elevated Jesus to a position of glory is available to elevate us to a life of Divine sufficiency. I emphasize again that this power is available to us for the sake of building our own character and exerting character impact upon others.

Do you see why I said earlier that I don't have to *provide* for myself -- because God has supplied perfect *sufficiency* for me? So this prayer is a petition that each Christian will realize his *powerful sufficiency* in Christ. However, again we must sadly admit that these expressions of power are foreign to the experience of most Christians. And we must again guess that one of the primary causes for the dearth of power is a lack of illumination. Most Christians are sadly blind to the great character power that is available to them.

Dr. C. I. Scoffield related an illustrative story from his preaching ministry. He was in a Bible Conference in the city of Staunton, Virginia, many years ago. The week had been especially busy, with two services daily and a round of other activities. On Friday night, a kind layman invited Dr. Scoffield to visit his workplace on Saturday in order to have a little relief from the press of people and the pressure of communication. He accepted the invitation and went with the man the next morning. He discovered that he was being taken to a mental institution which the layman managed. They casually toured the grounds, visiting along the way, then they entered the main building. As they walked down the long central hallway through the building, a heavily muscled man came toward them, though he was walking with the shuffling gait of a mental patient. As he came near, Dr. Scoffield stepped aside to let him pass, marveling at the muscled strength of his body. When he was out of earshot, Dr. Scoffield said to his host, "Man, you must have a real problem when *he* gets angry and goes on a rampage! It has been a long time since I have seen such a strong man." But the manager's answer surprised the preacher. "Oh, no, Doctor Scoffield," he replied, "that man is no problem at all. You see, as strong as he is, he is in this institution because he has the illusion of weakness. He thinks that he is so weak that he can't even lift a spoon full of food or a glass of water to his lips. Someone else must do it for him." Later that day, the Holy Spirit spoke to the preacher about the visual parable he had seen that morning. "My child, you have just seen a picture of the typical Christian of today, and the typical church. While the great power of God is perfectly available to those who believe, instead *they struggle under an illusion of weakness*." Friends, the primary difference between the Christian suffering under the illusion of weakness and the Christian functioning in the efficiency of God's power is the *miracle of illumination*.

Christian, *what you see is what you will be - within* the limits of God's revealed truth. *What you behold is what you will become*. I repeat, this is the most important prayer that any Christian can pray for another, and when this prayer is answered in a Christian's life, he has just become the recipient of the first great blessing toward total victory in Christ. By means of the miracle of illumination, the problems of *insecurity, insignificance, and insufficiency* are solved for the believer.

The Psalmist said to God, "In Thy light shall we see light." "The entrance of Thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding to the simple" (Psalm 119:30). As God gives us grace to see,

His story becomes ours, His vision becomes ours, His concerns become ours, and His vocation becomes ours. So illumination is a continual necessity in disciple-making. Lord, you have given sufficient light; now, give us sufficient sight.