When we begin to consider our salvation from a heavenly perspective it is an awe-inspiring proposition. We're taken from the darkness of sin and its penalty of death; we're given a new nature in Christ; we're now in Him, and He in us; we're sealed with the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption; we're given an inheritance in Him; and we are actually used by our Creator for the praise of His glory.

And it's because of all this that Paul approaches these Ephesian Christians and enters into their joy which is found in Christ.

Ephesians 1:15-18 ¹⁵ For this reason I too, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which *exists* among you and your love for all the saints, ¹⁶ do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention *of you* in my prayers; ¹⁷ that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. ¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

It's been about four years since Paul was in Ephesus as he is now in a Roman prison writing to these people. Instead of whining and crying about his situation he is rejoicing in the life they have in Christ. He's giving thanks to God and continually keeping them in prayer before the Lord.

Here is a man who was a gifted teacher and preacher; one who had so much to offer to the Church and where do we find him? In a place where he apparently isn't able to use these gifts, or so it would seem. And yet, being a willing servant, God was able to use him even in a prison cell, not just reaching the inmates, but people on the outside as well.

He's still teaching and preaching and he's praying and encouraging and pointing people to Christ. We might say, well he's Paul the apostle, he can do that sort of thing. No, he's Paul the apostle doing just what God called him to do even when it wasn't convenient. He wasn't a super-saint. In fact he was no different than you or me.

He has the same Savior, the same Holy Spirit who sealed him for the day of redemption, the same Spirit who indwelt and empowered him as we have. But he had learned something over the years. He learned that it didn't make any difference what his circumstances were. He learned that contrary to the way the world works, often times some of the greatest accomplishments which God will do in our lives, and in the lives of people around us, come in our weakest moments, not our strongest.

2CO 12:9-10 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

And in all of this Paul learned to be content and willing to be used of God in any and all situations. But we see here in our text that Paul had heard of the faith of these saints in Ephesus.

These Christians had faith in Christ and what it was producing was a love for each other, and the word for love here is agape. This is a love from God that is the kind of love which considers one another more important than yourself. It's a love which strives with people and seeks their best as it relates to their relationship with God. And it's a love which loves when others may not love you back.

The greatest demonstration of this kind of love is what we read in 1JO 4:9-11 "This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 10 This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. 11 Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another."

What John is saying is that the touchstone for our love for one another is the way Christ loved us. And Paul commends these Christians in Ephesus for this kind of love among the brethren.

This is the reason Paul is giving thanks to God. He is seeing the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives which is a demonstration of their salvation in practical ways which is not only seen in the Church, but in the world as well, as unbelievers are able to see this love of God shed abroad in their hearts. And Paul is excited to see the manifestation of God's work in their lives which proves their faith is real.

There were a lot of imposters in those days, even as there are a lot of imposters today. But true agape love is not something you can

fake, at least for very long. Agape love will endure, fleshly love will ultimately seek only to please self.

But faith and love must go hand in hand. To say we have faith in Christ and not love the brethren is a contradiction. Our faith in Christ is the result of Him first loving us. And if we love Him then we will also love those who have embraced Him and have found forgiveness in Him.

But notice that Paul's response is to pray for these people continually, which means he prays for them on a regular basis. And look at what he prays.

EPH 1:17-19 "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. 18 I pray also 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, 19 and his incomparably great power for us who believe."

Now this is interesting. In verses 15 and 16 Paul commends them for their faith and love and yet here he is saying, in essence, that he prays their eyes will be opened to see what God has done for them in Christ.

Is this a discrepancy? No! He is simply stating the truth that though they are walking in Christ and His love by faith, there is always room for growth. There is always room to learn more of our Savior. Can you imagine anyone saying, 'I've learned all there is to know about my infinite, Almighty God?' 'I couldn't love Him any more than I already do?'

No one has arrived when it comes to growing in Christ, not even Paul. He didn't stand still in his faith, he was always seeking the Lord and desiring to know Him better and love Him more.

This is why Paul addresses the Father of Christ as the Father of glory, in some translations, and in the NIV the glorious Father. In a sense Paul is in awe of this God who is glorious beyond comprehension in one sense, and yet who has revealed Himself that we might know Him.

It is this glorious Father who has given us His Spirit. And as Paul prays for these Christians he reminds them that this is his prayer for them, that God blesses them in a variety of ways.

Notice what he doesn't pray for. He doesn't pray for their finances, he doesn't pray for their physical needs, he doesn't pray for their businesses to prosper, he doesn't pray for their physical health. Does this mean Paul wasn't concerned with these areas of life, or that he never prayed for these things for these people? Of course not. I'm sure he came to the Lord with these real needs.

But what Paul is doing here is trying to remind these people of their higher calling and what it will take to pursue that call, and life they have in Christ, so that they might honor their glorious heavenly Father.

He prays that the Father would give them the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. Now, some translations would suggest that they receive "a" spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

I believe the NIV is correct here in saying "the" Spirit who is the Holy Spirit. This entire letter is filled with references to the third person in the Godhead. When the Father enlightens our eyes it is through the Holy Spirit. When He gives revelation it is through the Holy Spirit.

When He imparts wisdom it is through the Holy Spirit. When referring to the Messiah in Isaiah we read, "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" - (ISA 11:2)

It is the Spirit of God who is able to open the eyes of the blind and enable them to see their need for the Savior. But it is the Father who gives us the Spirit of God through His Son and the One who also recognizes our need to grow in wisdom and revelation and knowledge of Him.

Wisdom is something all men in this world, regardless of their relationship with God, can experience. There are some very wise people when it comes to this world. And wisdom is basically taking knowledge and using it in a way that produces good results.

But simply being wise in a worldly way will never give us the kind of wisdom that will lead us to God or be deemed really wise in the eyes of God. In fact the wisdom of this world will keep us from God if it's used as an end in itself.

This is verified by God in 1CO 1:20-24 "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has

not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

The wisdom we want as believers in Christ is a godly wisdom.

1CO 1:30-31 "It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God - that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. 31 Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."

This is the kind of wisdom we want to build on; a wisdom which sees the life we have in Christ by faith and continues to grow in this relationship. But this kind of wisdom found in the Holy Spirit will come through the means the Holy Spirit has ordained, which is the Word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit.

COL 3:16 "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom..."

James says, If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him." (JAM 1:5)

But we don't ask for wisdom in a vacuum. We don't ask for wisdom and then neglect the means for God's wisdom. To ask for wisdom and yet not spend time hearing from God and His wisdom, found in His word, is like asking to use the car without any intention of taking the keys with you. You can imagine have a great time behind the wheel, but you're not going anywhere.

And so Paul prays that wisdom, which comes from the Holy Spirit, according to His word, will be made manifest in their lives to where it's continually growing. Why? Because wisdom will cause us to live in reverence and humbleness before our God.

This too James speaks of in JAM 3:13 "Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom."

You see wisdom is not something we show off simply by saying wise things, or simply by giving wise counsel and having people

ooh and aah over how wise we are. "Boy, they say such wise things, they must be close to God.'

Certainly wise counsel is what God wants us giving to people, but are we living lives that follow that Biblical counsel and the salvation He gives us in Christ?

True wisdom from the Holy Spirit prompts our hearts to walk humbly before our God and allow the world to see what God is doing in our lives as we rely on His power and strength. But wisdom will also tell the world where this life comes from. They may not see it as wisdom, but that should never keep us from sharing it.

Sometimes we become intimidated by the "apparent" wisdom of this world and we shrink back. Don't ever forget what God says about this worldly wisdom. "Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?" (1CO 1:20)

Pray for wisdom, but find that wisdom as you seek the knowledge of Him. By the way, this knowledge, which we've discussed as found in His word, is not just facts and figures we store in our heads. This is why Paul prays that the Holy Spirit would give revelation in the knowledge of Him.

The word revelation in the Greek is apokalupsis and it means "laying bear, making naked." In other words revealing so as to make one see the truth. The world can read the Bible and can gain all sorts of information, but it is the Holy Spirit who reveals spiritual truths of God's word. Without His illumination we simply have gained knowledge without gaining the wisdom to understand what that word says and instructs as it relates first and foremost to salvation.

For the Christian we have the Holy Spirit who reveals truth. But to honor Him and humble ourselves before Him it would behoove us to come to Him and ask that He reveal all truth to us. And as we're seeking to be wise in Him, He will reveal these things to us in His word so that we may grow in our faith.

That's the ministry of the Holy Spirit; to conform us to the image of Christ, and it is through the word of God, as the Holy Spirit teaches and comforts us, by which we are being sanctified. This is what Jesus meant when He prayed to the Father; "Father sanctify them by the truth, Your word is truth." (Joh.17:17)

But notice what Paul continues to pray in our text in verse 18.

EPH 1:18 "I pray also 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,..."

Notice the phrase, "the eyes of your heart". This is what Paul wants touched in the lives of these Christians and all Christians. We talk about seeing with spiritual eyes and hearing with spiritual ears. This is what Paul is talking about here.

The prophet Isaiah prophesied of this opening of the spiritual eyes as it spoke of the Messiah who would come to accomplish this.

ISA 29:17-19 "In a very short time, will not Lebanon be turned into a fertile field and the fertile field seem like a forest? 18 In that day the deaf will hear the words of the scroll, and out of gloom and darkness the eyes of the blind will see. 19 Once more the humble will rejoice in the LORD; the needy will rejoice in the Holy One of Israel."

When we share the gospel of Jesus Christ with people we aren't just inviting them to consider the cold hard facts of what this message is all about. We must also pray that the Holy Spirit will open their spiritual eyes to see this truth for themselves as something they must have.

But when we talk about spiritual eyes what we're really dealing with is the heart of a person, the spirit of a person which needs to be awakened. We get a glimpse of this when Paul shared the gospel with some people down near a river. "One of those listening was a woman named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth from the city of Thyatira, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." (ACT 16:14)

In fact, this is what Jesus Christ clearly told Paul that He would do in his ministry. Paul may have been giving the message to others, but it was God who was opening the eyes. He told Paul, "I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me." (ACT 26:17-18)

None of us can boast that we had eyes to see or ears to hear. It is God who opens these for us so that we may reach out to Him for the life He offers in Christ. He reminded the Hebrew Christians to "Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you stood your ground in a great contest in the face of suffering." (HEB 10:32)

Many of you may remember the time and place when the light went on and you saw yourself a sinner in need of a Savior and you saw the truth that only Jesus Christ is that Savior whom you needed to embrace by faith.

But why does Paul pray that the eyes of these Christians be opened when in fact they had already been opened to the truth of the Gospel? Because we never stop appreciating the beauty of our salvation. We never stop learning what it is that God has done for us in Christ. This is why the first part of this letter goes over the gospel and what it entails.

EPH 1:5-8 "He predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will - 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace 8 that he lavished on us..."

I've heard people say, 'why do we need to study the gospel when we're already saved?' Because it's the gospel, the good news of your salvation which should be the primary focus of your life in Christ. It is an appreciation of the gospel which will urge you to live to God's glory out of thankfulness for so great a gift.

Paul is saying, I pray the Holy Spirit fills you with such an understanding of this new life in Christ that you can't contain it and you go out and live it for His glory.

That's what he says in verse 18... "I pray also 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."

Why does he pray that our eyes be enlightened by the Holy Spirit? "In order that you may know the hope to which he has called you..." Does he mean to know it for the first time? No, he means to see it for what it really is. The word here for "know" in the Greek is not ginosko, which is the word we usually associate with knowing as far as gaining knowledge.

This word is eido {i'-do} and it means to perceive with the eyes. It suggests that you've already got the knowledge, now understand its

deeper implications. Paul wants us to know what is the hope of His calling; to perceive with our spiritual eyes the deeper truths of this great salvation which he describes as the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints...'

Often times we have a tendency to view our salvation as though it were simply the means to being forgiven of our sin and not having to spend eternity in hell. As true as that it is, if this is our only perception of what it means to be saved then it is a very short-sighted approach to our salvation in Christ.

The atonement found in the blood of Jesus Christ upon the cross for the redemption of His people is no small thing. For us to be able to stand before a holy God as our sins are forgiven in Christ, as His righteousness is put to our account, as we place our faith in His substitutionary work is paramount.

But the hope that Paul speaks of in our text goes well beyond forgiveness of sins and into the sure knowledge that our salvation is moving toward a future life with Christ that we will possess precisely because we have had our debt paid for in full by our Lord at the cross.

Paul speaks of having our eyes enlightened by the Holy Spirit unto an understanding of this future hope, this future life. The Greek word for enlightened is photizo and simply means to shine. The idea here is similar to walking into a dark room and turning on a flashlight as you point it at an object to see it clearly as it stands out from everything else in the room.

The way in which the Holy Spirit accomplishes this is to shine on the very object who is Life and that is Christ Himself. But the Holy Spirit takes the truth of Christ's life and explains it through the very means that He has ordained and that is the word of God.

For Paul to say that we need to have our eyes enlightened by the Spirit to know what this hope is necessitates that we can go to a specific place to get this knowledge and understand it as the Spirit gives us understanding. This place is the very word of God we have in our possession.

NAU **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness;

NAU **2 Peter 1:20** But know this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture is *a matter* of one's own interpretation, ²¹ for no prophecy

was ever made by an act of human will, but men moved by the Holy Spirit spoke from God.

When we understand what this revelation is and where it comes from we can approach the word of God with the confidence that all that we need to know about God and His redemptive plan and His future plans for His people is in our hands and to be read and studied with the assurance that the Spirit can take His word and shine on it in such a way that we will be able to see what this salvation is all about and rejoice in it with thankfulness.

Paul's prayer was for us to understand the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints..."

There is a "what" and a "why" inferred in this sentence. The "what" is the hope found in the inheritance, the "why" is when you understand the inheritance you'll long for the hope in a such a way where the things of this world will grow strangely dim as the light of this hope now illumines your path as you walk with Christ on a daily basis.

Psalm 119:103-105 ¹⁰³ How sweet are Your words to my taste! *Yes, sweeter* than honey to my mouth! ¹⁰⁴ From Your precepts I get understanding; Therefore I hate every false way. ¹⁰⁵ Your word is a lamp to my feet And a light to my path.

If the Spirit of God is illuminating what this hope and inheritance is then it is incumbent upon us to find out what it is as we go to His word.

We are told a number of things about this hope and inheritance. It is purchased for us by the blood of the Lamb. It is eternal in nature. It is that which is part of the eternal Kingdom of God. So, is it possible to get a glimpse of what this inheritance actually looks like? Evidently, Paul thinks so.

Ephesians 1:18 ¹⁸ *I pray that* ^athe eyes of your heart ¹may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the ^bhope of His ^ccalling, what are ^dthe riches of the glory of ^eHis inheritance in ^fthe ²saints,

Paul's prayer is that every believer would have their eyes enlightened in such a way that they see what the hope of Christ's calling is. And then he adds that they may see the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

Let's quickly address the hope of His calling. Paul identified this hope in a number of places, but one of the first places it is mentioned is in connection to a Messianic prophecy that David was given.

Acts 2:25-28 ²⁵ "For David says of Him, "a SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. ²⁶ "THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; ²⁷ BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO "HADES, bNOR "ALLOW YOUR "HOLY ONE TO "UNDERGO DECAY. ²⁸ "YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE."

Well, you say, what does this have to do with our hope in Christ since it is Christ Himself who is being addressed? But notice that Christ Himself glories in a specific hope that is directly tied to our hope. David speaks of the Messiah who says, "My flesh also will live in hope." The hope that our Lord Jesus speaks of is His bodily resurrection from the dead which then goes on to place that resurrection in conjunction to being full of gladness in the presence of the Father.

In other words, our Savior obtains the hope being the first-born from the dead and in that reality we also find our hope of being raised from the dead in Him.

NAU **Romans 6:8** Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him.

Romans 6:6-11 our old self was crucified with *Him*, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; ⁷ for he who has died is freed from sin. ⁸ Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, ⁹ knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. ¹⁰ For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. ¹¹ Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.

This life that we live in the resurrected Christ is the life that Paul addresses as his hope.

Acts 23:6 ⁶ But perceiving that one group were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, Paul *began* crying out in the Council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; I am on trial for the hope and resurrection of the dead!"

If our hope in this world does not rest in Christ and His resurrection, and our future resurrection from the dead, then we have missed the one thing that enables us to persevere with gladness as we rest in that hope. If our eyes are not on our resurrection then our eyes have not been enlightened to what our futures are in Christ.

Our eyes remain in this world and the circumstances of this life and we miss living in the reality of that resurrected life. But what is a resurrected life? It is a life of hope that God has called us to and Christ has secured for us in His atonement and resurrection that is a return to Paradise without the curse.

A physical resurrection without an inheritance in a physical world is simply not logical. And this is precisely what the apostle Peter makes clear for us as he juxtaposes this present world of sin and curse with the future world delivered from the same.

2 Peter 3:10-13 ¹⁰ But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up. ¹¹ Since all these things are to be destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, ¹² looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be destroyed by burning, and the elements will melt with intense heat! ¹³ But according to His promise we are looking for new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells.

This same new heavens and new earth is precisely what John spoke of in the book of Revelation.

Revelation 21:1-5 NAU Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer *any* sea. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be *any* death; there will no longer be

any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." ⁵ And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true."

The hope that Paul speaks of in Ephesians is the hope of Christ's calling which is a hope in the resurrection, but what we find in 1Peter and Revelation is the future home of all of us who have been resurrected in Christ, and Paul's desire is that the eyes of our hearts would be enlightened to see what this future home, this inheritance is all about.

Ephesians 1:18 ¹⁸ *I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,

The riches of the glory of His inheritance would include all of the inheritance we possess in Christ, both now, and particularly in the future. And what is part of this inheritance that both John in Revelation, Peter in his first letter and Jesus with His Sermon on the Mount are speaking of?

Matthew 5:5 ⁵ "Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.

The new earth and the new heavens are part of this eternal inheritance where Christ Himself will dwell among His people.

Paul essentially says in our text, 'I pray that you begin to see the glory of this future inheritance, because when you do your hope will soar and your life will find its purpose in seeking those things above that will one day come down here in the one place that God created as man's home and His future dwelling place.'

What does this inheritance look like? John paints a picture for us when he describes what will not be there.

The old earth will not be there, which is to say the cursed earth will no longer exist. What does an earth without the curse look like? The first thing it looks like is the earth. It will not be a non-earth, but a new earth; an earth that will be glorious in every way. Mountains, lakes, waterfalls, colors of every description with every season coming together to declare God's glory.

The beauty of forests, plains full of grain and fruit and every imaginable food that God will provide for His people to enjoy. It

will be an earth where life is the very air we breathe and the smells of the perfumes of flowers that we encounter at every turn.

It will be an earth where mourning, death, crying, pain and everything else that is associated with sin and the curse will no longer exist. But most important it will be a new earth with a new King who dwells among His people and whom we will have access to all our days for eternity.

These are just a taste of the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints that Paul encourages us to look into. And the word of God is full of the descriptions of this new earth and new heavens if we would just seek to see with eyes that are opened by the Holy Spirit.

Do we long for our new home, our inheritance in Christ, or are we stuck grasping for straws here in this present world full of sin and curse which is destined to be burned? Here's Paul's perspective.

Colossians 3:1-4 NAU Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. ³ For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. ⁴ When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.