

EPHESIANS: GOD'S GLORY IN THE CHURCH (study 2)

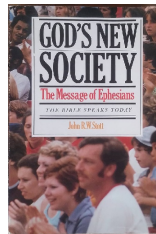
Predestination

PURPOSE, PRIVILEGE, POWER

But we all with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image FROM GLORY TO GLORY, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

2 COR. 3:18 (NAS)

From the question how we became God's people, we now turn to the question **why** God made us his people, and so from his will to his glory. We saw earlier how three times Paul alluded to "the purpose of his will" or something similar. Now we have to see that those times he alluded also to God's glory. He writes that God destined us to be his children to the praise of his glorious grace (5-6); that he made us his heritage and appointed us to live **for the praise of his glory** (12); and that one day he will finally redeem his people who are his possession, **to the praise of his glory** (14). [Stott 49, emphasis added]



Even love is not enough

1:15-17 The Ephesians already have faith which saves. They even have love which demonstrates their faith. What else could Paul possibly want for them?

So far then as we are to distinguish between *gnosis* and *epignosis*, we may say that *gnosis* is the wider word and expresses "knowledge" in the fullest sense: *epignosis* is knowledge directed towards a particular object, perceiving, discerning, recognising: but it is not knowledge in the abstract: that is *gnosis*. [Robinson 254]

[*epignosis*] implies an exact and penetrating *gnosis*... [H.A.W. Meyer *Critical and Exegetical Hand-book to the Epistle to the Ephesians* (tr. 1884) 338]

[1:17] And did they not possess these? Yes; but at the same time they needed increase, that, being endowed with a larger measure of the Spirit, and being more and more enlightened, they might more clearly and fully hold their present views. The knowledge of the godly is never so pure, but that some dimness or obscurity hangs over their spiritual vision. [Calvin 212]

Study 2a: RECEIVING OUR FULL INHERITANCE (1:18-21)

1:18-19a Failure to grasp which privileges of the hope may result in our impoverishment? (James 4:1-3)

Divine illumination and human thought belong together. All our thinking is unproductive without the Spirit of truth; yet his enlightenment is not intended to save us the trouble of using our minds. It is precisely as we ponder what God has done in Christ that the Spirit will open our eyes to grasp its implications. It is commonly assumed that faith and reason are incompatible. This is not so. The two are never contrasted in Scripture, as if we had to choose between them. Faith goes beyond reason, but rests on it. Knowledge is the ladder by which faith climbs higher, the springboard from which it leaps further. [Stott 67]



Lewis Sperry Chafer

To know God in His perfections, as He is revealed in Christ (Col. 2:9), is the exalted privilege of believers; the human incapacity for such knowledge being overcome, in the divine provision, by the Spirit of God who is appointed to take of the things of Christ and show them unto us (John 16:12-15) ... the eyes of the heart, not the understanding merely, are to be enlightened. When revealed by the Spirit, the deep things of God are not addressed to the human understanding alone; they claim the response of the affections and will. [Chafer 55,56]

1:19b-21 Why do so many Christians seem powerless to be salt and light? (Matt. 5:13-16)

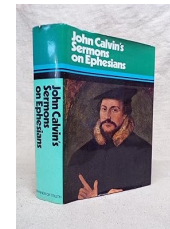
[re 19b] *Ischus, kratos, energeia* ... The first is inherent strength; the second power, the third the exercise of efficiency of that strength. Or, as Calvin says, The first is the root, the second the tree, the third the fruit. Whatever be the precise distinction in the signification of the words, their accumulation expresses the highest form of power. It was nothing short of the **omnipotence of God** to which the effect here spoken of is due. No created power can raise the dead, or quicken those dead in trespasses and sins. [Hodge 79, emphasis added]

[v.20] God the Father is said to have raised Christ to "his right hand," because he has made him to share in his government, because by him he exerts all his power; the metaphor being borrowed from earthly princes, who confer the honour of sitting along with themselves on those whom they have clothed with the highest authority. As the right hand of God fills heaven and earth, it follows that the kingdom and power of Christ are equally extensive. It is in vain, therefore, to attempt to prove that, because Christ sitteth at the right hand of God, he dwells in heaven alone. His human nature, it is true, resides in heaven, and not in the earth; but that argument is foreign to the purpose. The expression which follows, *in heavenly places*, does not

**"At God's right hand ..."
– Is this *literal* language?**

at all imply that the right hand of God is confined to heaven, but directs us to contemplate the heavenly glory amidst which our Lord Jesus dwells, the blessed immortality which he enjoys, and the dominion over angels to which he has been exalted. [Calvin 216]

[1:21] Thus we see how the world, through a superstitious dread of angels, departed from Christ. It was indeed the unavoidable consequence of the false opinions entertained respecting angels, that the pure knowledge of Christ disappeared. [Calvin 217 - he points us to 6:11, 'the wiles of the devil']



1:22 Why is it that the 'fruit' of heretical teachers cannot last? (John 15:1,4,5,8,16)

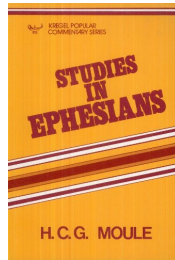
The term Head combines two important aspects of truth: (1) Christ now presides over the Church as the One who directs every moment of life and every act of service of those who comprise this heavenly company. He is the bestower of gifts (4:8), and, by the Spirit, directs the exercise of those gifts (1 Cor. 12:47). (2) But Christ is now Head over the Church in the sense that from Him he draws all spiritual vitality. Because He lives, the members of His body live also. He is to the Church as the vine is to the branches, as the shepherd is to the sheep, as the corner-stone is to the building, and as the bridegroom is to the bride. [Chafer 61]

1:23 Which great doctrine do many conservative Christians neglect?

We now come to what is perhaps the most remarkable expression in the whole epistle. It is the phrase in which St. Paul further describes the Church, which he has just declared to be Christ's Body, as the fulness of Him who in all is being fulfilled. [Robinson 42]

Certainly nowhere else in Scripture is the church explicitly said to "fill" or "complete" Christ, whereas constantly Christ is said to indwell and fill his church. For the church is God's temple, so today Jesus Christ who is the glory of God fills the church by his Spirit. [Stott 65]

The life eternal is "to know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent" (John xvii. 3). They who have it are indeed to "rest and be thankful," in respect of the Rock beneath their feet; they are to taste, and to evidence, the deep repose born of the discovery of the Summum Bonum itself. But they are to be thankful and never to rest in respect of the realization of what they have discovered. "He who says *Enough*", writes Augustine somewhere, "is already a lost man." If the Christian man is indeed one who has caught a genuine glimpse of "the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. iv. 6), how can he *not* be sure that he has still before him indefinitely greater discoveries there, "from glory to glory"? His root is settled, and for ever; he will never find a substitute for the Cross. But his branches will extend themselves, and for ever, in that place of root and rest, to receive more and more the living powers of the light and air around. and to bring forth more fruit and yet more for the heavenly Planter. [Moule *Studies* 43-44]



[1:23] *That filleth all in all.* This is added to guard against the supposition that any real defect would exist in Christ, if he were separated from us. His wish to be filled, and, in some respects, made perfect in us, arises from no want or necessity; for all that is good in ourselves, or in any of the creatures, is the gift of his hand; and his goodness appears the more remarkably in raising us out of nothing, that he, in like manner, may dwell and live in us. [Calvin 218]

A FRIGHTENING AFTERTHOUGHT: According to Rev. 2:1-7, the Ephesian congregation did not fulfill Paul's wish for them. In failing to nourish their faith and love with the full hope "of His Calling" (1:18) they apparently lost their first love also, eventually extinguishing the Ephesian lamp of faith itself.

The fullness of Christ -- the glory of the church's calling

Paul is not in the habit of throwing out hyperboles without discrimination ... Paul, we find, never thinks that he can say enough in his descriptions of the Christian calling ... our unbelief and ingratitude led Paul to employ this glowing language. We never form adequate conceptions of the treasure revealed to us in the gospel ... Paul's object, therefore, was not only to impress the Ephesians with a deep sense of the value of Divine grace, but also to give them exalted views of the glory of Christ's kingdom. That they might not be cast down by a view of their own unworthiness, he exhorts them to consider the power of God; as if he had said, that their regeneration was no ordinary work of God, but was an astonishing exhibition of his power. [Calvin 213-214]

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