

The theme of chapter one is God has made Christians fabulously wealthy in Christ Jesus.

The chapter divides conveniently into two halves. The first part is full of praise, the second part is full of prayer.

The praise part Paul blesses God for having blessed believers in Christ Jesus with every spiritual blessing, in the prayer part he asks that God would open their eyes to grasp the fullness of this blessing.

We looked at the first part last week. Tonight we hope to look at Paul's prayer.

Paul was a great prayer warrior. 1:16 ***I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.***

He is thanking God that they are in fact Christians. These Gentiles have been made co-heirs with the Jewish Christians of the magnificent kingdom that is coming.

You may ask how did Paul know they were Christians? He says he has heard certain things about them and he mentions two things in particular in v15.

This pulled me up short recently "***I have heard about*** as if he didn't know these people. Yet Acts 19 and 20 tells us that it was Paul who founded the church in Ephesus

So how can he say "he heard" about them as if they were strangers to him?

Then I remembered that this letter of Ephesians was probably a circular letter sent out to a whole lot of churches Paul had never visited. Also - no doubt many new believers had been added to the Ephesian church since he was there last.

The words "at Ephesus" are not found in the earliest manuscripts from the 2nd c which you can see in the Chester Beatty Lib FOC – which is at the back of Dublin castle. Well worth a visit.

A show of hands who has been to the Chester Beatty Library? Many years ago when it was located in Ballsbridge I made my poor mammy join me on that visit.

Why was Paul happy to say that these people were Christians even though he had never met them? He had heard they exhibited two characteristics always found in a true Christian - v15 ***faith in the Lord Jesus and love for all the saints.***

Notice the order in which he puts them.

Faith in the Lord Jesus is first - then behaviour.

There are many people in the world who are moral and decent but who are not Christians on their own admission because they don't believe.

It is not even belief in God in general that makes a person a Christian.

Paul emphasises first and foremost ***faith in the Lord Jesus***

Jesus has to be at the centre.

Christianity is Christ – is the name of a book I have at home and it spot on.

Everything starts with Jesus and ends with Jesus.

You stop looking to yourself to be your own Saviour and look to Jesus only to save you.

You have no confidence in yourself but total confidence in what Jesus did for you on the cross.

You believe that he left heaven and came into this world to save you.

It is what he has done on the cross that is the means of saving you.

The SOM did not come to be served but to serve and to give his my life as a ransom for many. Mark 10:45

He has done for us what we could not do our ourselves.

Eph 1:7 ***In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins***

In this verse Paul summarized what Jesus accomplished on the cross as forgiveness of sins.

C S Lewis the Cambridge Professor who wrote chronicles of Narnia and sold 100 million books was on a BBC "Any questions" type program and was asked "Professor Lewis what can Jesus Christ give me that no one else can give me and I want the answer in one word?" And without hesitating for a moment simply said "Forgiveness".
Through Jesus you don't have to work off bad karma, or atone for past sins.
He offers forgiveness.

On the cross all our sins were transferred to Christ. He became sin for us.
He paid our debts for us.

This is the great swap. The Father placed our sins upon Jesus and then placed the righteousness of Jesus on those who trust him.

It is Faith in Jesus plus nothing. It is not trusting Jesus plus other things like good works, or acts of righteousness, or beating your body. No – it is exclusively faith in the Lord Jesus.

A supplemented Christ is a supplanted Christ. to quote John Stott.
To add to Jesus is to take away from Jesus.
Jesus has done everything necessary.

Have you ever had the sensation of drowning?

I had - once - when I was about 10 years old or so.

Near where I grew in Dublin there is canal and as a child I spent a lot of my time in the Summer months there. One day I was standing beside this canal minding my own business, just looking at swimmers frolicking about in the water, when someone came behind me and pushed me in. I couldn't really swim. Even though I was only 10 my whole life seemed to flash before me like a dress rehearsal of the day of judgement. I can't tell you how you can see your whole life in the matter of seconds but I did.

One of my older neighbours was in the water at the time, heard my cries for help, grabbed me by the scruff of the neck and brought me to safety.

I managed to listen to my rescuer and co-operated with him but this is when the drowning person is at his most dangerous. The temptation is to splash like mad, grab the would-be rescuer for dear life, and the two of you go under.

To be rescued you have got to stop saving yourself and place yourself totally in the hands of the rescuer. If your rescuer is a real "life guard" – they know what they are doing and have been trained for the job.

To be saved by Jesus you must stop – and place yourself completely, totally and only in the hands of the **life guard** Jesus.

BTW a few months ago I went for a walk along the canal – I hadn't been there in about 55 years – and who was there fishing? my rescuer. I had a long chat with him but he didn't remember saving me that day.

"Something to tell my wife when I get home tonight". He said

Notice - He is called the **Lord Jesus**.

A Christian is someone who accepts the teaching of the bible that Jesus of Nazareth is God come in the flesh.

The Greek word for Lord is Kurios - the word applied to Jesus in the NT is Kurios.

In the 3rdC BC when the Hebrew OT was translated into Greek whenever the word Yahweh or Jehovah appeared it was translated as Kurios. Jesus is the second person of the Trinity – God incarnate.

The second thing that convinced Paul that these were Christians is **love for all the saints** **Saint** in the NT is simply another word for Christian.

A love for all the saints. Paul knows that something major has happened to these people.

I must confess I didn't like Christians when I met them first. I thought they were boring talking about Jesus and God. A bit embarrassing to be around. Narrow minded. Self-centred. I didn't want to hang around such people. But when I experienced the new birth and began to understand spiritual things – I changed and my attitudes towards Christians changed.

A love for the saints - All the saints – not simply the clever ones, or those way up the social ladder but also the poor and the not so bright Christian. - why? because we have a common destiny. A glorious eternity that we will be spending together.

You can turn these two things around and make them a test for yourself to see if you are a Christian.

Have you believed in the Lord Jesus exclusively and do you have a love for all the saints? If you answer no - according to the NT you are not yet a Christian.

Paul prays to the **glorious Father** for these believers.

Bear in mind Paul has already told us various things about them in the first half of chapter 1. They have already trusted in the Lord Jesus. Adopted into the family of God. They have been sealed with the HS of promise, they have received the down payment or deposit of their eternal inheritance – they have known a sample of heaven already - they have already been filled with the holy Spirit. Yet Paul wants them to experience more and more.

God has made Christians fabulously wealthy in Christ Jesus - spiritual trillionaires – **we have been blessed with all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus** - yet most of us chose to live as paupers.

I remember from many years ago Nicky Gumble telling the story of the funeral of a bag lady that he was to officiate at HTB in London.

A fellow pastor (Sandy Miller) had a word with him before hand and said “this funeral is going to be fairly choker block with people - many of them very well of.” Gumble couldn't understand this. Surely she couldn't have had that many admirers having lived many years on the streets of London. Sandy explained that the dead woman chose to live on the streets – pushing a supermarket trolley with her bits and pieces – but in fact she was worth £5m. That was when £5m was a lot of money.

Many of us are like that lady in the spiritual realm.

Or Like little children paddling in the shallow end of a vast ocean of truth and experience – when God wants to take us by the hand and bring us into deeper waters where we can learn to swim.

Paul prays at least 5 petitions for the Ephesians **Knowledge Insight Hope riches power**

Of course what Paul prays for the Ephesian believers is what we should be praying for ourselves. All of this applies to you and me too.

Can you just imagine the problems these believers faced in Asia minor – a lot of them were probably slaves – with money problems, health issues, relationship hassles yet Paul has the audacity to pray for basically one thing – that they have a greater knowledge of God. To know him better.

I don't think Paul is ignoring their problems but he knows they would cope much better by knowing God better.

Of the 5 things he prays for – the first two are general and the other 3 are specific.

v17 that the glorious Father may give you ***the Spirit[a] of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.***

Spiritual Insight comes from the HS. He is the S of W and R.

The natural mind cannot understand the things of God. We need the S to enlighten us. 1Cor 2:9

This knowledge is not theoretical but experiential.

I grew up in a religious environment where we were told this sort of quest for a knowledge of God was best left to the professionals – those who had given themselves to live in a convent or monastery. Leave such aspirations to the “religious”. The “laity” like me - you don't need to bother your head – you are too busy earning a living.

But here Paul prays for **all** believers – that they may know him better.

He goes on 18 ***that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened***

In the bible the heart includes the mind and will as well as emotions.

We need inward vision, our spiritual eyes opened to grasp the truth of God.

You need spiritual insight to know the following three things - In the Greek each of these starts with the word ***what***.

I pray that you will know what is the hope of his calling, what is the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, , 19 and what is his incomparably great power...

Knowledge of three things – the Hope of our calling, our glorious inheritance, and the Power towards us.

V18 ***that you will know what is the hope of his calling,***

When we were baby Christians we were taught that there are 2 callings. The general call and the effectual call.

Many, many people have heard the gospel but never responded to it. They know the contents of the gospel very well but leave it at that.

Just the other day I was reading the account of a man who was taken very seriously ill and the pastor visited him in hospital. “Pastor if I pull through this illness I will give my life to Jesus”. He recovered but didn't respond to Christ. Sometime later he fell ill again and promised the same pastor “it won't be the same this time if I recover I will definitely respond to Jesus and join your church”. Of course you know what happened. He did recover and has yet to turn up at the church.

He heard the **general** call - ***“Many are called but few are chosen”***

Then there is the **effectual** call.

That lovely passage in Romans 8:28

28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who[i] have been called according to his purpose.

Here is someone who has responded to the call of God and loves God.

30 And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

These respond to the call of God and are justified and glorified. That is not true for the man or woman in the world who have heard the general call but not responded.

These Ephesians had experienced an effectual call – God had been on their case. He has their phone number and calls them up. That gets their attention. Their lives were interrupted, The call came to them like a command and was irresistible – they sat up and took notice and responded.

1 Cor 1:23 .. 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.

A strong statement this – the cross is foolishness to the Greek and Jew but to those who have been called the cross is the power of God and the wisdom of God.

What makes the difference? - **the call.**

Called to what? To a particular **hope**.

Hope in bible terms is not a maybe or hope so or a possibly be but a confident expectation that what has been promised will come to pass.

This speaks of an assurance of salvation. It's the assurance that you have been called.

God wants you to know you are his. That you belong to him. That you are absolutely certain of this.

That our great debts have been paid.

The sin problem has been resolved once and for all time.

JC Ryle said "Assurance of salvation makes you as bold as a roaring lion and as light as a soaring bird".

Let me ask you - Are you sure? Do you know this? You can.

In Eph 2:12 Paul says that before we became Christians we were "**without hope**" - now we have a **living Hope** to quote Peter 1P1:3 John in 1John 2:calls it a **purifying hope**. Paul in Tit 2:11 calls it a **blessed hope** and he just reminded us in Romans 8 – those who have been **called** in the mind of God are already glorified. It is as certain as that.

The religion I was brought up in - salvation was a world of great uncertainty.

To claim to have an assurance that when you died you would go to heaven was to be guilty of the sin of presumption. In school (we were doing our Leaving Cert so about 17 or 18) I vividly recall the response that our priest gave to a comment I put to him in our RE class one day - "Father, unlike us you have gone into religion in a full time, professional, way. You have given your whole life over to God. At least you are assured of heaven not like us"

He replied "*I have no more assurance of heaven than you*". I was shocked by that.

And it wasn't that the man was modest or lacking in confidence. The very opposite: he was an extrovert, very confident, strong man, a rugby player. But he was simply articulating what was the official theological position of the church he represented.

In the area of salvation it is a world of uncertainty, hesitancy and doubt.

Then you read this letter to the Ephesians and it was like entering another world altogether. Here you are breathing different air. It is full of assurance, knowledge, confidence and boldness.

Paul wants these believers to ***Know the hope to which you have been called***

Because the hope that God has called you to - leads to a glorious inheritance - 2nd thing he prays for – that they may know what is

18 the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,

There are two ways of looking at this inheritance. The scholars tell us that the Greek can be understood either way.

God's inheritance in us or our inheritance in God.

An inheritance that God receives or an inheritance that God gives.

Certainly in the OT God looked upon his people as part of his great wealth or treasure, his possession. His portion.

Ps33:12

***Blessed is the nation whose God is the lord,
the people he chose for his inheritance.***

Peter says the same thing about Christians -

1 pet 2:9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession,

Some say that is what is meant here in v18 –

Paul wants you and I to know we are a precious jewel in the sight of God.

When the Father looks at us he sees us as absolute beautiful. Something exquisite. Loved with an everlasting love.

The other way of looking at this – open their eyes that they may see the inheritance that God is preparing for them. The same idea as in 1 Cor 2:9

***'What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived'[a] –
the things God has prepared for those who love him –***

That we may have glimpses of what is ahead for us. Like Moses who stood on Mount Nebo and looked into the promised land.

It is either - We are God's inheritance or God is our inheritance.

Both views are correct but the second seems to fit better in the context. 1:14 ***They have been sealed with the holy spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance***

Christians are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ – and one day we will enter into all of our inheritance.

Roms 8:18 I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.

What that inheritance is in detail – we don't know. 1 John 3:2 “***We do not know what we shall be***” so John admits to a measure of agnosticism. ***But we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.***

(1 Cor 6:3) What we do know - we know we shall judge angels. We shall judge the world. **We will rule and reign with him.** We will have resurrected bodies and live on a born again earth. In a born again universe. **Christian Universe. (Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father.** Matt 13:43) There will be no sorrow there, no tears, nothing that makes us miserable and depressed. God will have a change of address and move from heaven to earth then we shall see him face to face. There is no greater blessing that a human being can experience than that – the beatific vision. (BE A TIF ICK)
 And yet there are some people talk about being bored in heaven. Are you mad?
 Think of the greatest experience you have ever had on planet earth and multiply that by a million and you are beginning to approach what it will be like. And yet the yardstick that Paul points us to here is our **deposit**. That is our sample and foretaste of heaven.
 Hab 2:14 As the **waters cover the sea** so the presence of God will envelop the planet in that day.

So Paul, Peter and John and the NT don't regard it as presumptuous that we should think about our glorious inheritance – or even to look forward to it with joy. Paul prays that we would know it and glory in it – the riches of the glory of it.

Third petition and to know what is

19 his incomparably great power for us who believe.

The Greek word for **incomparably** is huper from which we get our word super, **great** is megathos mega in English and the Greek word **power** is dunameos Super Megaton Dynamite of God. Isn't that a mouthful. Superlatives piled upon Superlative.

And yet Paul's prayer is not actually that they would have power but that they would come to know the greatness of the power of God that is already working in them. Their very believing is the result of this power of God. In chapter 2 he tells them another way you have already experienced this power – when you were resurrected from spiritual death.

Paul is saying that if you believe in Jesus it is only as a consequence of this power. You are the recipient of a miracle. That should induce a sense of wonder in us all.

You would have thought if Paul wanted to give us an example of God's great power look no further than the creation of the Cosmos – planets, stars and galaxies. But that is not what he points us to. He says God's great power is supremely shown in three areas – 1 the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, 2 his exaltation to share in his Father's throne at his RH, and 3 his headship over his body and our union with him.

This same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in you.

Why point to the resurrection as the ultimate demonstration of God's power?

Because of death and evil.

Death is everywhere around us. We are all dying. We will all die one day. You may postpone it through healthy living but you can't escape it. Nothing can stop the process of decay and decomposition. We are dust and to dust we shall return.

But God has done what mankind cannot do. He raised Jesus from the dead and halted the natural process of decay. Remember Ps 16 and Acts 2 – the promise was **he would not allow his holy one to see corruption.** He raised Jesus to a new life that no one every experienced before or since.

Then God rewarded him for his obedience with supreme authority and the place of highest honour.

Fulfilling the Messianic prophesy of Ps 110 "**Sit at my RH till I make your enemies your footstool.**" God has put all things under his feet. Every conceivable intelligence that has been or is in this world and in the world to come - he reigns over all supremely.

22 And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Jesus is reigning now in all his glory. King of King and Lord of Lords.

Notice it is **For the church's sake** God appointed him head over everything.

The church, you see, is not peripheral to the world; the world is peripheral to the church. The Message

God made him the controller of all things – including the material universe.

He is the head of the church and the universe.

He said himself **All power has been given to me in heaven and earth.**

He exercises his power and authority in the interests of the church – he influences everything in the world – in **common grace** all that is good, even the evil he is overruling and in

Providence Jesus is in complete control over everything that happens in history - moving everything along for your sake and my sake - so that one day the father will present us - his bride to the son all glorious without spot or wrinkle or any such thing at the marriage supper of the Lamb.