

Notes for the Ones Called-Out to Meet

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The Importance of Asking God for Insight and Perspective

By Dan Trygg

“For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we haven't stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding,¹⁰ so that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the experiential-knowledge of God.¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for all endurance and patience, with joy¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the saints' inheritance in the light.¹³ He has rescued us from the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son He loves.”

Colossians 1:9-13

The apostle Paul had a very clear and definite vision for the value and importance of asking God to give us insight and revelation. The books of Romans, I & II Corinthians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and I & II Thessalonians all contain references to Paul's prayer life for these various churches. Almost always, the first order of business was to thank God for the existence of each group of believers (Rom. 1:8,9; I Cor. 1:4; Eph. 1:15,16; Phil. 1:3-8; Col. 1:3-8; I Thess. 1:2-8; 2:13; II Thess. 1:3,4). In Ephesians 1:15-21, however, the apostle allows us into his thoughts, as he describes what he has been consistently praying for the believers in that city. Ever since he heard of their faith in Christ, he had not ceased praying that God would give to them a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true-knowledge of Him. He prayed that “the eyes of [their] hearts” would be “having been enlightened”, illuminated by having the object of investigation lit up by God's revealing light, so that they might come to perceive important spiritual truths. In 3:1-4, he speaks of how God had “by revelation” made known to him insight into “the mystery of Christ”, a mystery which had previously been hidden but was now to be proclaimed. In fact, he was to preach to the Gentiles the “unfathomable riches of Christ”, and “bring to light” what is the administration of God's mystery, so that His many-sided wisdom could now be made known through the church to rulers and authorities in the heavenly realm (3:8-10). Again, just a few verses later (14-21), Paul prays for us to be prepared, strengthened and established enough so that we could be able to comprehend the greatness of God's love, and experientially know it, ...in order that we might be filled up to all the fullness of God. In Philippians 1:9-11, he describes how he prayed for them, asking that their love might overflow more and more with “real knowledge and all discernment”, so that they might know how to “approve the things that are excellent”.

When you put these passages side by side, it becomes very evident that **Paul saw a need for God to do something to reveal hidden truth.** Remember, **the Greek word for “truth” implies that it is a “reality which was there all the time, but was overlooked, and is now perceived”.** We see that God had to bring Paul into an understanding of certain hidden truths by acts of “revelation” or uncovering. In Galatians 1:11,12, he specifically states that his awareness and understanding of the gospel had not been “received... from man, nor was I taught it, but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ”. Having experienced that, and having years of ministry experience under his belt, **Paul was very aware of how “unaware” the typical believer can be.** It is clear from the burden of his prayer life in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians that it is possible not only to be a Christian, but to be Christians who have responded well to the Gospel, and who actually have a reputation for love and proclaiming the message, and yet be merely “skin deep” as far as perceiving some of these other insights that Paul sees as so important. Furthermore, not only do we Christians have a need to grasp things that we do not understand, there are also spiritual beings in heaven who are watching us to learn important insights about God through us. They, too, have a need for revelation, and God has chosen to use us as His instrument to teach and illustrate truths that they could not grasp in any other way.

What is “revelation”? How do we gain spiritual insight, and why is it necessary for us to be praying and asking for God to act on our behalf to make us see and grasp these truths? The very words used by Paul in Eph. 1:17,18 to describe this process are very significant. There are **two basic word pictures** used which can help us grasp more clearly what our situation is, and why we need intervention from God to supply what is lacking. The first word picture is found in the word for “**revelation**”. Remember, Paul was praying that they would receive a “spirit of wisdom and revelation in the true-knowledge of Him”. **The word, “revelation”, literally should be translated as “uncovering”.** It describes something that is hidden, or out of view, because it is covered over by something. Revelation is the process of removing the covering so that we can see what is hidden. **“Taking the covering away” is what Paul was asking God to do for us. Unless He removes the cover, we cannot possibly know what is underneath it.**

The second word picture is found in the phrase **“having been enlightened”**. Literally, this is describing someone who cannot see because they are themselves in darkness, or the object of their investigation is obscured by darkness. **God can “bring light” so that their eyes can see to distinguish reality more clearly**, or He can specifically “illuminate” the object so that they can see it. In either case, without an external light source, they are incapable of seeing. **Paul was asking for God to bring light to their eyes, so that they could see. Unless that happens, they cannot possibly perceive clearly.**

Why do we need this revelation and enlightenment? Because we had formerly been under the authority and dominion of darkness, and were in fact darkness ourselves (Col. 1:13; Eph. 5:8). The enemy's kingdom and influence is darkness. He rules by deceit, phoniness, bluff and pretension. **The Bible tells us that he blinds the minds of the unbelieving, so that they might not see the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ. Are we to suppose that once we have become Christians that he stops trying to blind us?** Is it realistic to expect that once we have "seen the light" that we have no more “shadowy areas” in our behavior or our thinking? It is true that while Jesus has set us free from the *authority* of darkness, and that our citizenship has been transferred to the kingdom of light, nevertheless we are like pilgrims traveling through Satan's territory. His influence is on every side. **If we do not choose to walk in the light, we can be quickly overtaken by shadowy thoughts and influences.** Paul warns us to “lay aside the deeds of darkness, and put on the armor of light” (Rom. 13:12). We are to no longer participate in darkness, rather we are to expose it (Eph. 5:7-14). It is true that for us a new day has dawned, and we have the light of Christ living within us, yet these and other passages convey clearly that **it is possible to get stuck in, ...to traffic in, ...to live in darkness, so that we even lose our bearings and become ineffective** (e.g., I Jn. 2:11). In the big picture, the true light may be here, and may even be shining within our hearts, ...the darkness itself may be passing away in reality, yet if *we* continue to walk in it, *we* can be blinded by it (I Jn. 2:8-11). **We are not only just novices**, who need assistance in understanding new concepts, as though we were a blank slate that could simply be written on. **We are ones who have been programmed to see things in a distorted way, ...AND we have a living, ongoing adversary who attempts to continue to distract, mislead, and contradict** so as to keep us away from discovering a true knowledge of God, or of His will. Furthermore, Paul informs us that there are strongholds, arguments built into our thinking over time, specifically designed by the enemy to keep us from an experiential knowledge of God. In light of all this, wouldn't it seem reasonable to suppose that **we need help from beyond our own minds?** It should not surprise us, then, to see the apostle's focus on asking God for this help.

How do we obtain the revelation and enlightenment that come from God? James 1:5 tells us to ask God, and He will give wisdom. Proverbs 2 develops this a bit more, “If you will **receive** My sayings, and **treasure** My commandments within you, **make your ear attentive** to wisdom, **incline your heart** to understanding; for if you **cry out** for discernment, lift your voice for understanding; if you **seek** her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will discern the fear of Yahweh, and discover the knowledge of God. ...you will discern righteousness, justice, equity, and every good course” (vss. 1-5,9). There are six principles in these verses:

- (1.) **Accept**, don't disregard insights from God;
- (2.) **Value** them, for they are precious;
- (3.) **Be watchful**, for truth, wisdom and insight may come at times, and in ways, you do not expect;
- (4.) **Yearn** for insight, don't be resistant;
- (5.) **Ask** for it with unremitting continuance and passion;
- (6.) **Hunt** for insight, go out of your way to pursue understanding and revelation.

To these, I would add:

- (7.) **Turn away from known sin**, for if you walk in darkness, it will prevent you from seeing clearly;
- (8.) **Partner with others of like mind**, for sometimes they can see things you can't. They can hold you accountable, or be supportive, when you need it. An important part of this is to
- (9.) **Confess** your faults and struggles as a way of exposing the darkness to the light, so that it loses its power;
- (10.) **Humble yourself** in any ways possible. Fasting would fit into this step, as a way to open your heart and to remind yourself of your dependence upon God.
- (11.) **Walk in love**, for the leading and fruit of the Spirit will always be to serve and value others; and,
- (12.) **Step out** on any new bits of insight you may receive. Sometimes when we do, it is like stepping out of the shadows into the sun, and many new things become visible.

God stores up wisdom for the upright, and is a shield to those who walk in integrity (Prov. 2:7). He gives wisdom to everyone generously and without reproach, when they ask (Jas. 1:5). Let's be “praying and asking”.