

THE GIFT OF SPIRITUAL VISION AND UNDERSTANDING

Ephesians 1:18

... having the **eyes of your hearts enlightened**, that you may **know** what is the **hope** to which he has called you, what are the **riches of his glorious inheritance** in the saints,

LARGER TEXT

15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places . . .

- 1. THE FACT OF SPIRITUAL INSENSITIVITY**
- 2. THE CAUSES OF SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS**
- 3. THE WAY INTO SPIRITUAL UNDERSTANDING**

EYES OF YOUR HEART

The fact that St. Paul wished this for these good saints is proof that such things are not universally enjoyed by all Christians.

This fact about the Ephesians was already true of these disciples when the Apostles found believers in Jesus who had not yet received the power of the Spirit.

The Ephesian Christians is an interesting study, because they were uniquely strong in doctrine and in their love for the saints and their loyalty for St. Paul, but they seemed to have an ongoing

weakness in their spirituality . . . a kind of diminished relationship to the Holy Spirit. And note what Jesus says to this church in the book of the Revelation, and what he will do if such weaknesses are not remedied. He puts the onus on **them** to fix the problem.

This church is remarkable in so many ways. They had SO MUCH of what it takes to be a strong church, and yet, they lacked something in the realm of their hearts. They were dull and insensitive in some ways, and here St. Paul points it out.

What did such spiritual dullness produced in them? It prevented them from understanding their faith, their God and their future. Their inner life affected their outer life — and so it always doe, for where SPIRITUAL LIFE IS, THER IS VIBRANT LIVING.

In fact, all of our hearts have corresponding members to our outer man. We have an outer being, an inner being and an innermost being. If we have sensations in your body we should also know and understand that we have similar sensations in our hearts too.

(Pulpit Commentary)

Verse 18. - That having the eyes of your heart enlightened. "The eyes of your heart" is an unusual expression, but it denotes that to see things clearly there is needed, not merely . . . intellectual clearness, but moral susceptibility and [inner] warmth - a movement of the heart as well as the head (compare the opposite state, "blindness of the heart," in Ephesians 4:18).

(Jamieson-Fausset-Brown Bible Commentary)

18. understanding—The oldest manuscripts, versions, and Fathers, read "heart." Compare the contrary state of unbelieving, the heart being in fault (Eph 4:18; Mt 13:15). Translate, "Having the eyes of your heart enlightened" (Eph 5:14; Mt 4:16). The first effect of the Spirit moving in the new creation, as in the original physical creation

(Ge 1:3; 2Co 4:6). So Theophilus to Autolytus (1.3), "the ears of the heart." Where spiritual light is, there is life (Joh 1:4). The heart is "the core of life" [Harless], and the fountain of the thoughts; whence "the heart" in Scripture includes the mind, as well as the inclination. Its "eye," or inward vision, both receives and contemplates the light (Mt 6:22, 23). The eye is the symbol of intelligence (Eze 1:18).

THERE ARE DIFFERENT WAYS OF KNOWING

The Epistemological Question is a Modernistic Obsession

What does it mean to KNOW something?

This is the question.

HERE ARE SOME COMMON IDEAS: *(not wrong, and often helpful, but incomplete)*

Reason (Intellectual)

Methodology (Empirical)

Experimentation (Proofs of laboratory science)

These are NOT the only way we know things.

See: Philosopher John Macmurray's, *Religion, Art and Science: A Study of the Reflective Activities in Man*

FURTHER WAYS WE "KNOW" THINGS:

- **Intuition** - to know something that cannot be known
- **Knowing something from the heart** - like friendship
- **Evidences** that do not fit in a scientific experiment
Evidences for the soul / for love / for human connections of heart — taking the reality of the world for granted and acting on such common presuppositions as "agents" rather than observing philosophers or scientists.
- **Relationships** — Knowing others through "community."

SPIRITUALLY: Knowing something by the Holy Spirit

- **Illumination** of mind and spirit -

- **inner awareness** - a mystery
 Word of Knowledge
 Word of Wisdom
 Prophecy - and so forth (Romans 12 / 1 Co 11-14, and so forth)

This SUPERNATURAL aspect is what some believers

- **Repudiate** with regard to perceiving the Presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist
- **Decry** about Consecrated objects
- **Disdain** about a sacramental approach to the Christian life and Orthodox spirituality /
- **Reject** about the Charismatic gifts — and it is exactly this from which we must change our minds - repent - have a change of heart and transformation in our thinking.
- **In fact** - we cannot really grow-up as Christians unless there is a fundamental shift in this area of our SPIRITUAL FORMATION.
- **We have to MAKE A DISTINCT DECISION to trust** in that which the Bible clearly teaches but is INEXPLICABLE in purely scientific terms — — and yet — — as I noted earlier — — we already give credence to the inexplicable in many ways everyday when we unconsciously and inexorably treat our natural experiences as realities by loving our children, our spouses and friends, when we engage in altruistic behaviors, when we care for the needs of others, when we feel sympathy for people in need, when we experience empathy for those who suffer, and so on.
- These unconscious behaviors are our own personal confessions that there is more to life than bald intellectual calculations; that there is something deeper — something that

lies beneath the appearance of things — that human beings are much more than the sum total of our biological-material parts.

- We believe we have a soul because we act like we do — — — unconsciously. We cannot help it. Even some behavioral scientists tell us that we are (apparently) hard-wired to act as though our life has meaning, purpose and soul.
- Many will deny the existence of anything beneath the surface, but no one consistently acts as though life is without ultimate meaning, or that the soul does not exist — and the is VERY TELLING. Leonard Cohen sings, “You live your life as if its real, a thousand kisses deep”

SO - Why have Christians chosen paths of skepticisms and cynicism?

I believe it is caused by several things, like, our training, our personal experiences and the natural propensities of what the Bible calls the “flesh” to think of Spirit-things as esoteric metaphysical gobbledegook.

I think we choose a dry spiritual path because of our fears and because of religious quackery.

We do so, I think, because of the abuses and manipulations we have see from false practitioners . . . and sometimes because the phenomena of the Holy Spirit are not easily acquired, nor are they quantifiable/verifiable by scientific methodologies.

We want our spiritual lives to fit into our own agendas, to support our personal worldview, to be achieved without great effort, and to

be a certainty without questoins, and the truth is True Spirituality is never about such things — This is what our Apostles and the early Church Fathers tell us — They tell us that these spiritual realities are FACTS - and that they are also **necessities** for our **growth** and **happiness** in the **Faith**.

Many Christians have become more rigorous than the “French Enlightenment Rationalists” that created our modern culture of doubt and unbelief - especially in the West - and this climate is - perhaps - the single most common reason for our spiritual dullness - especially with regard to recognizing and understanding the signs, wonders and miracles of God in the Church these days.

This is why (I think), we choose secular mechanistic methods for building churches, and prefer to pursue money and power, influence, entertainment models glib professionalism, and secular modalities with which to plant and grow churches. But what we need most is to rely on the life and virtue of the God of that Church. We think we know better than He does about what is best for our lives and how to grow his Church.

We simply DON'T - and often WON'T - believe in the power, presence and potentiality of the work of the Holy Spirit. All that stuff is too unpredictable, uncertain and uncontrollable.

We often require that SPIRITUAL methods be first EXPLAINED to in purely rationalistic terms or we simply will not embrace or employ them.

As a result we SOMETIMES become practicing “Doubting Thomas’s,” in our best moments, and “Functional Atheists in our worst.

We are often very much like unbelieving Israel, or better, like our Lord's unbelieving disciples. :D Just look at his rebukes to those who walked so closely with him.

He didn't always speak softly, gently and tenderly to his followers - quite the contrary.

Sometimes he really took his followers to task for their unbelief and their resistance to the work of the Holy Spirit. What do you think Jesus might say to you and me in our own unbelief?

They were often dull, blind in their hearts and twisted up in their hearts, which Jesus had to address time and again, and more intensely as he approached his crucifixion. — In what ways are you and I dull, blind and twisted in our hearts — and how do you think our Lord might deliver us from such stultifications?

Study, sometime, all the things Jesus said to his followers about their lack of faith and what he says is the remedy for our malaise.

WHAT IS OUR WAY FORWARD TODAY?

Our way forward today is exactly like Christ's disciples' way.

First of all — our hope is found in **waiting on the Lord in prayer** — and do so with perseverance — until we are actually empowered by His Spirit . . . by a robust, personal experience.

As we experience the “warm-touch” of the Holy Spirit in our hearts **things really do change inside of us, and our eyes are opened.**

He will not fail to enlighten you as you present yourself before him with an open heart.

St. Luke ALWAYS refers such experiences - (in the gospel of St. Luke and in the Acts) - as being FILLED with the SPIRIT.

WE CANNOT HAVE THE EYES OF OUR HEART ENLIGHTENED BY THINKING IT INTO BEING, NOR WILL THIS COME TO US BY READING THEOLOGICAL BOOKS OR THROUGH OUR DOING GOOD WORKS.

THE REALITY OF THE FULLNESS OF THE SPIRIT CAN ONLY BE OURS BY MEANS OF OUR ACTUALLY EXPERIENCING THE POWER OF CHRIST'S SPIRIT - AND THIS ONLY COMES TO US BY MEANS OF A DIRECT EXISTENTIAL EXPERIENCE OF THE FIRST ORDER.

HOW DOES THIS HAPPEN?

IN THE OLD FASHIONED WAY - WE ASK - WE SEEK - WE KNOCK — AND WE DO SO IN THE CERTAINTY THAT GOD WILL ABSOLUTELY ANSWER OUR PRAYERS. (Heb. 11:6)

WE MUST CRY OUT FOR THIS FULLNESS TIME AND AGAIN - AND MANY TIMES WE NEED TO DO SO "OUT LOUD" - IN OUR PRIVATE CLOSET OF PRAYER. WE MUST GET SERIOUS WITH GOD - GET HONEST WITH GOD . . . or if we don't know

how . . . WE SHOULD ASK SOMEONE WHO KNOWS WHAT THIS IS ABOUT TO HELP US - TO PRAY WITH US - TO LAY HANDS ON US AND TO PRAY FOR THE COMING OF GREATER POWER OF THE SPIRIT INTO OUR LIVES.

LET IS BEGIN BY ASKING OUR LORD TO INCREASE THE VISUAL ACUITY OF OUR HEARTS WITH THE EXPECTATION THAT SUCH VISION WILL PRODUCE IN EACH OF US A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF HIS WILL, HIS POWER, HIS HOPE AND HIS GRACE.

Prayer For Church Vision

Dear Heavenly Father - Gracious God, we desire as a church to take hold of the vision You have for us and pray that You would lead and guide us to take a collective step of faith, in the direction that You would have us go.

Help us we pray, to grasp the church vision that You have for us, and may we be sensitive to Your leading and guidance. Prevent us from seeking to implement our own inferior ideas, or substitute our own manmade notions for Your plans and purposes.

Draw us closer to each other and to You, as we seek Your face together in prayer. May we be strengthened in the inner man, united together in the unity of the faith and prompted to carry out Your plans and purposes to Your greater glory.

We pray that the church vision that emerges in our hearts will have been prompted by the Holy Spirit, for the edification of the saints and to Your praise and glory – this we ask in Jesus name

Amen / source: <http://prayer.knowing-jesus.com/Prayers-for-Vision>