

# Delighting in the Knowledge of God

## Ephesian 1:15-21

### Worship and ‘Access Points’ to the Knowledge of God

#### Ephesians 1:15-23

#### INTRODUCTION:

It has been said that a swine has never seen a star. That is no doubt true; but it is not because their vision is vastly inferior to ours—it is because they have no interest in stars. A swine has never seen a star because pigs were not created to be worshippers. Mankind is created to worship. Therefore man is endlessly curious—he maps, explores, adores, investigates, composes, and interprets. Man was created to be an enthusiastic spectator of God’s excellence. You might say that inside of us is a little ‘radar’ turning—always looking for beauty, excellence, and nobility.

God has created us to find happiness in Himself—by pursuing God as our object of desire. But that God-given yearning was perverted by the Fall. Romans one tells us that since the entrance of sin we continue to worship; but that the object of our worship has changed from God to the creature and the creation. Every unregenerate person is subservient to created things because of the inescapable fact that we serve what we worship (Rom 1:). Only by the gracious miracle of regeneration is a person delivered and restored to become a true worshipper of God.

Our text (Eph 1:15-23) is about finding your source of excellence in God. When Paul wrote Ephesians one, he was opening up the topic of *transformed seeing*. Paul is not a rank moralist. No, he always anchors Christian duty in heavenly realities. In his epistles he sends us to the heavenlies—which is our matchless position in Christ—in order to instill in us *transformed seeing*. Paul knows that *transformed seeing* produces *transformed living*.

***In both of Paul’s prayers in the book of Ephesians he is praying for supernatural sight and comprehension on behalf of believers. Transformed living includes a lifestyle of worship in which we function increasingly as a living sacrifice.*** That means that our faculties of thought, speech, and affection are devoted to Christ and focused on things above (Col 3:1-3).

Now as to this topic of delight in God, it ought to be self-evident that we cannot have love and fond affection for what we do not know personally. And we cannot know personally what we have not beheld or perceived. Therefore our exhortation throughout this message will be *stir yourselves to improve your spiritual sight. You were created to be a worshipper—therefore you cannot, NOT worship. Your heart refuses to live as a dry desert with no object of desire. This helps us understand why idolatry is a perversion of true worship. You are always on the lookout for excellence. You are always pursuing your object of desire because happiness is the byproduct of that pursuit.*

***Our hearts know well our object of desire. Christ refers to one’s object of desire as a man’s treasure. Every man is always reviewing his treasure; adding to his treasure; speaking of his treasure.*** No wonder Puritan John Howe referred to delight in God as “the top, middle, and foundation of true religion.” Jonathan Edwards offers a similar observation, “True religion

consists primarily in the affections.” And John Piper makes his entry on the topic, “Delight in God will take you from *duty to desire* – it will make you holy and it will enable you to love others supernaturally.”

I recall a story about the Scottish divine, Thomas Chalmers. He was a faithful expositor of the Word of God; but after five years of ministry he was distraught that his congregation was so cold and passion-less for spiritual things. Chalmers took a summer sabbatical. During times of extended prayer he asked the Lord to give the answer as to why the church members were stagnant.

The Scottish pastor was hit with a life-changing impression: “Thomas, you are preaching to the mind, the will, and the conscience; but not to the affections!” Well he returned to his parish and penned his most famous sermon, “The Expulsive Power of a new Affection.” In that sermon Chalmers unfolded the biblical truth that idols of lust won’t budge unless they are displaced by a higher affection. His message was not lost on his hearers or upon his fellow pastors. His emphasis on the role of the affections in true religion began a new chapter of lasting fruitful ministry.

What Chalmers and other divines have discovered was that the clearer your view of who God is toward you in Christ; the more strength you will have against sin and the greater motive to release and smash your idols. Nothing is a more powerful an influence in your life than to know you are beloved of God and to feel that in your whole soul.

Lest we forget, delighting in God is commanded in Scripture (Ps 37:4). I don’t believe I’m going out on a limb this morning to say that delighting in God is a felt experience. For the Scriptures utilize such terms as *taste, pant after, thirst, pleasure* and *enjoyment*. Romans 5:5 describes the love of God being *shed abroad, or poured out*, in the heart of the believer.

But this is not the result of passivity on our part. Maurice Roberts says that if we do not stir ourselves to have fresh encounters with God, a chill will come over the soul and our hearts will go in search of other lovers. Delight in God is not an option – we were created for it; it unites the heart and keeps us from formalism (protects from a divided heart -- outward religion only). Our active response to Gospel love drives every *proper motive* in your Christian life. This is the Pauline model of sanctification.

***Our theme from Ephesians centers upon the truth that God is known by means of the way in which He saves us—by His sovereign grace and mercy. The chief object of our meditation is our relationship with God as it is settled in Christ.***

“Our theology is that of a crucified God who is “Lamb” and “Husband” to us forever – who in His infinite purity said to us in our filthiness, “Live! Live!” He saw the mystery of iniquity in my heart and still betrothed me and adopted me” (Howell Harris).

Salvation imparts a relationship which is to control our lives—our purpose is to press on to know the Lord in worship and devotion by means of considering His saving work towards us. We are going to ***gaze upon the Lord*** through three “portholes,” or access points found in our text: the ***hope of His calling, His inheritance in the saints, and His power toward us who believe.***

**Vs. 15, 16** -- Paul is thanking God for His intervening grace in the life of the Ephesians. The content of Paul's prayer is an extension of the praise he has offered for God's sovereign grace in vv. 3-14.

Paul is expressing his gratitude to God for His intervening grace in the life of his readers, the Ephesians. The Apostle's prayer of thanksgiving is the recognition that God's sovereign grace is exemplified in their faith, love and spiritual progress.

Key to our message is WHAT Paul is **going to ask for**; AND, that he is asking on behalf of folks who **are already believers**. He wants them to go on in their knowledge of the Lord. The knowledge of God transforms us by degrees—thus growing in your knowledge of Christ is indispensable to your progress toward maturity.

**Vs. 17** – Paul's prayer of intercession concerns the accomplishment of God's purpose in the lives of these believers; namely that they would **grow in the knowledge of the Lord** (2 Pet 3:18).

That is God's will for us as well.

What can we learn from this prayer regarding **how we can** grow in our knowledge of the Lord?

Paul's prayer is a model for us in our apprehension of the knowledge of God. ***Begin by approaching God in prayer and asking Him to give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in order to know Him better.*** (Title "Father of Glory" refers to the sum of His attributes.)

Our posture in this prayer is one of worship characterized by overflowing thanksgiving for God's gracious self-disclosure; He initiated the relationship with us. We remember His grace as we pray; that God grants your request on the basis of the merits of Christ.

***What is the means necessary to achieve the end of knowing God better? Answer: The granting of a spirit of wisdom and revelation (1:17).*** (When Paul refers to the *knowledge* of the Lord, he uses the strengthened form of the Greek word for *know*, *epiginosko*. This intensified word for *know* means to be personally familiar with and conversant with the object of knowledge.)

The Christian is dependent upon the Spirit of God to reveal more of the Lord and His ways to us. The Holy Spirit searches the deep things of God. It is His blessed task, His ministry to unfold them through the Word to us (see **1 Cor 2:9-16**). He continually gives light; His ministry is to illuminate spiritual truth, giving us understanding and captivating our affections. It is only by His work that we can we know God better.

***A spirit of wisdom and revelation is vital because there is nothing more important than knowing God. Your experimental knowledge of God is the one thing you will bring to glory. Your delight in the knowledge of God is your strength (Neh 8:10). Growing in the knowledge of the Lord is to be our consuming passion: "Let us press on to know the Lord"(Hos 6:3).***

**V. 18** -- The prayer is for the **insight** needed to grasp certain truths that are **revealed by the Spirit**. The "EYES OF THE HEART" is a fitting metaphor. The Spirit reveals, but we must have certain faculties enlightened in order to receive and grasp what He reveals. The heart of the saved man 'sees' what the five senses cannot see. Our physical eyes need light in order to work and the eyes of our heart need spiritual light in order to function. (The Apostle uses a perfect

participate to describe the Spirit's work of *enlightening* the eyes of the heart. The use of the perfect tense suggests that the enlightenment of our heart's 'eyes' continues to produce a life-transforming result.)

Paul frames the object of their knowledge (which the Spirit will enable them to recognize) as *three questions*. The FIRST truth to be revealed in order to know God better comes from the question, “**what is the hope of His calling?**”(v. 18).

***‘Calling’ is a salvation term describing God’s sovereign power in bringing us to Himself—to be called is to be saved (1 Cor 1:26).*** The HOPE of one’s calling is that aspect of salvation for which we are waiting – what we are looking forward to in the future. That *hope* refers to life in the new heavens and the new earth in the presence of God (Rom 5:2; Eph 5:27; Col 3:4).

PROBLEM: In our generation we reflect too little on the future and almost never upon eternity. This is why you need urgent help from God in order to be able to **know the hope to which you have been called**. Only then will you be able to navigate with eternity’s values before your spiritual eyes. It is very common today for professing believers to have vague and general thoughts of God, of grace, and of Christ. In our pursuit of the knowledge of God, we move from vague thoughts to specifics. When God answers our prayer for *a spirit of wisdom and revelation* and *enlightened ‘eyes of the heart’*—He is providing specific heart-thrilling content to our hope. But again, we are not passive in receiving this answer to pray. The Spirit reveals by means of diligent study and meditation upon the Word of God.

Regarding the specific content of our hope—redemption has a result; a consummation. Your right-relatedness to the Trinity through Christ has a very clearly defined goal; it is ultimate conformity to Christ at the moment of glorification. Our election before the foundation of the world is aimed at this goal—“*chosen that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love*” (1:4).

***You’ve been called out of darkness into His marvelous light for this very purpose – that you may gain the glory of Christ (2 Thess 2:14).*** ***The more fixed your hope is on the final goal and outcome of redemption, the more straight and resolute will be your walk towards that goal.*** Perfect conformity to Christ is our necessary ‘fitness’ to please, worship, and enjoy God perfectly.

All history is moving towards this event in which the sons of God are ***presented publicly to the rational universe*** (that is the holy angels). The entire creation is poised for this event (Rom 8:18-25). It is a soul-ravishing thought that God has synchronized our public presentation as the sons of God with the remaking of the universe (into the new heavens and the new earth – see Romans 8:18-25).

The goal of redemption is not adequately described as simply the absence of sin, death, and sorrow and a new immortal body. The consummation of redemption will be the enjoyment of ***God in Christ communicating Himself to us forever***. Regarding the bliss of the eternal state, Howell Harris notes, “It is eternal love attending you: it is Christ given to be your life, light, and blessedness without cessation. And it is the redeemed enjoying God and pleasing God perfectly.”

In glory the Church will be a spotless reflection the character of the Godhead—God’s communicable attributes will have reached maturity in her—she will be as much like God as creatures can possible be. Through Christ the *new humanity* will perfectly reflect the moral majesty of God. Relations within the society of the redeemed will reflect the excellence of relations within the Trinity (perfect love, honor, deference, goodness, humility, wisdom, truthfulness).

*Now all of this is to fulfill God’s vision (dream if you will) – for He has never desisted from the goal He announced originally to make man in His image and likeness. What is His dream? It is to have an eternal temple to dwell in. Not a temple made of inanimate things, but a temple of living stones.* That is how God describes you, the redeemed; the saints—as *living stones* that are growing together, being fitted together, being built up into a dwelling place of God in the Spirit; a spiritual house for a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ (Eph 2:21-22; 1 Pet 2:5).

*Heaven is not an eternal vacation—it is an eternal vocation for that will be the source of our bliss. Randy Alcorn observes in his book, The Treasure Principle, “Heaven will be a place of rest and relief from the burdens of sin and suffering; but it will also be a place of great learning, activity, artistic expression, exploration, discovery, camaraderie, and service,” p. 36.)*

At the consummation the ages, the aim of redemptive history shall be realized (as announced by an angel who is filled with wonder and joy)—“**Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be among them**” (Rev 21:3).

There’s an old Chinese proverb, “*fish and guests smell after three days.*” If we are careful about who stays in your home for an extended period of time, how much more do you think God cares about who His *eternal* human companions will be?

(APPL. This should give us some insight into our tests and trials, for they keep surfacing where our affections lie. God is wise to test us. Testing exposes our loyalties. Affliction shows us what we really love—it detaches us from the love of the world and anchors our hope more securely to God as our true ‘home.’)

When Puritan pastor Richard Baxter went house to house visiting church members, he always asked his parishioners this question, “**Do you see all of life as preparation for the next life?**” Only if one can say ‘yes’ is that person truly in touch with the hope of his calling. Thought of heaven is a ‘litmus test.’ It has been said of the Apostle Paul, ‘His religion was supremely the religion of heaven.’

The SECOND truth to be revealed in order to know God is, “**what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints?**” (v. 18b). This truth continues the “glory” theme. At the consummation of the age our sonship will become instantly visible to the watching universe (see 1:14; Rom 8:19, 23; 1 Jn 3:1).

The Apostle John tells us in his gospel that the saints are a gift from the Father to the Son (see Jn 6 & 17). (In essence the Father selected out a “Bride” for His Son—the redeemed make up this celestial Bride.) God’s valuation of us His people is established by His valuation of the Son.

It is precisely at this point where we need the Spirit's help. Our slumbering spiritual eyes must be opened to take in this glorious spiritual light. We need to know who we are and what our destiny is as God sees it. We must move from doubt to certainty in the matter of these spiritual realities if we are to grow to maturity. When we are preoccupied with basing our intrinsic worth on temporal things it inhibits our ability to *reason spiritually*—the issue is not net worth in the world, but our identity in Christ! Paul prays that his readers would grasp the riches of God's inheritance in the saints.

***God's inheritance is not the holy angels, nor is it the nearly infinite rainbow of beautiful galaxies, it is a company of redeemed sinners who are conformed to their Savior and Head; the society of the redeemed that make up God's eternal companions. This is precisely why Paul prays for a spirit of wisdom and revelation, and for enlightened eyes of the heart—this will not grip you so as to captivate and ravish your heart unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to you.***

When He does reveal it to you, it will prove to be an incentive to live in light of the glory of God and in view of heaven and the riches of glory to be lavished upon you (see 1:8; 2:7). No wonder Paul wants us to grasp who we are in Christ, for God has made us to be His inheritance in Christ.

***We who make up the company of the redeemed are Christ's inheritance, His Bride—that the Lord Jesus Christ might be the First-born among many brethren (Rom 8:29). Wonder of wonders—He inherits us and we inherit Him!***

Not only do we form Christ's inheritance, the riches of God in Christ comprise our inheritance (including the physical creation)! Abraham, a type of every believer lived in tents his whole life even though he was *heir of the world*—Rom 4:13. Yes, the *meek shall inherit the earth*. Abraham is the prototypical heir of the world. He was willing to live in a tent, owning no land except for his wife's grave plot. He could hold things loosely in his mortal life because he knew that in the age to come he would inherit it all as 'God's country, God's city' (Heb 11:14-16). It's reminiscent of 'Pilgrim' leaving the city of destruction in order to enter the celestial city.

The subject of the saints as Christ's inheritance opens up for us the mutual love typified in the marriage covenant. Heaven is about *mutuality*—*I am my Beloved's and He is mine*. In heaven mutual ownership will take our joy over the top. This is to be a source of delight to us—the marriage metaphor is a figure of speech filled with incredible promises of mutuality and intimate love (Jn 17:26).

(EXAMPLE. -- C. S. Lewis offered the following contrast; compared to the Lord dwelling with the redeemed in glory, the most ideal romance among mortals is like a glass of milk mixed with water (it's insipid by comparison).

***Mutuality means that we give ourselves to God and He to us in a covenant of co-ownership.*** As Spurgeon said, "I'll be able to say on that day, God on yonder throne is mine!" This is where God is taking us—glory is moving closer and closer to us. In glory our fellowship with the Lord will be one of perfect intimacy. *"Our communion with God lies in his giving*

himself to us and our giving ourselves and all that he requires to him” (Owen, *Communion*, p. 3). Heaven will be the consummation of the great mystery, *Christ in you and you in Christ* (Col 1:27.)

To be in God’s presence is to **behold** God. The pure pleasure involved in beholding God has begun in the saints (2 Cor 3:18). But for the present in our **beholding** we see *in a mirror dimly*—then it will be *face to face*. “*And it will be said on that day, ‘Behold, this is our God for whom we have waited that He might save us’*” (Is 25:9).

***Mutuality is alluded to in a number of Scripture passages on heaven. And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bondservants shall serve Him; and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads*** (Rev 22:3-4).

Regarding the bliss of seeing the glory of Christ, the Reformers referred to “***The beatific vision.***” To **beatify** is to bring a person to a state of exalted joy above anything possible on earth. It means the vision that makes us *blessed*, or *happy*. ‘Beatific’ is from two Latin words, “*beatus*”, blessed, and “*facere*,” to make. To look at God will change us and make us like Him, “We shall be with Him and see Him as He is (1 Jn 3:2).

The *beatific vision* which will bring us endless exalted joy will be our beholding of Christ in His glory (this is what our Lord prayed for in John 17:24—that the saints would *behold His glory*.)

The sight of Christ glorified will ravish our souls (2 Thess 1:10). We will never cease to marvel at the sight of God looking out at us through eyes of flesh—our amazement will never cease as we behold our glorified Savior with the marks of our atonement on His glorified body. The slain Lamb is the center of heaven; the Light of heaven. (EX. The invalid Puritan Isaac Ambrose, who from his convalescent bed meditated on the glory of Christ for thirty years, said, *God’s desire is to converse with us after our form.*) (Isaac Ambrose, *Looking Unto Jesus*).

***This vision of God will be the consummation of our knowing God and will give us full delight and joy for all eternity.*** “In your presence is fullness of joy, in your right hand are pleasures forevermore” (Ps 16:11) (Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, pp. 189-190).

Your present ability to **behold** the Lord, albeit in a mirror dimly, is what differentiates you from the unsaved around you. Scripture describes the redeemed in 2 Corinthians 3:14-18 as the *unveiled ones*. Beholding the glory of the Lord is a gift of sovereign grace that has begun for the redeemed (2 Cor 4:4-6). Our present *beholding* is preparing us for eternal beholding.

Though you ***behold in a mirror dimly now***, you are being *fitted* to ***behold face to face***. In order to ***behold face to face***, you must be a partaker of God’s holiness so that you can look upon Him without fear, shame, and covering your face. This will happen the moment you see Christ—*when we see Him we will be like Him for we shall see Him as He is* (1 Jn 3:2; Phil 3:20-21).

Your eternal vocation will involve **beholding**—*it will be your source of ravishment and bliss*. (APPL. -- *Is beholding so as to delight in the Lord a part of your vocation now?* If so, then you are experiencing the answer to the prayer in our text—a *spirit of wisdom and revelation, and heart eyes enlightened*.)

(EX. I find myself agreeing with Maurice Roberts and other divines who caution us about studying God’s attributes in a cold, sterile, philosophic manner. Our study of God ought to be in

a doxological mindset – that is for the purpose of delight and enjoyment and adoration and relational knowledge of Him. This exhortation is a logical bridge to our third access point.)

**Vv. 19-20 -- The THIRD truth** to be revealed in order to know God is, “**what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe?**” (v. 19, 20 ff.) What comes to mind when you think of a demonstration of God’s power? Perhaps the parting of the Red Sea? Or the very act of creation when trillions of plants and animals sprang to life from dust. Or maybe the explosion of a supernova creating a glowing cloud light years in diameter.

Well, Paul’s choice for our *knowledge of God’s power* is in keeping with the acts of God that concern you directly—His sovereign grace. Paul highlights the power of God exerted when Christ was raised from the dead. The resurrection of Christ is the vindication of Christ. It is the destruction of sin; it is the conquest of death. It is the guarantee of our justification. It is the proof positive and pledge of your eternal glory. (No wonder Paul regarded God’s power in the resurrection to be an avenue for a growing knowledge of the Lord. Paul wanted to know Christ and the power of His resurrection (Phil 3:10).

Beloved, the resurrection of Christ is the cause of your new birth. God can make a sinner a new creature by means of the new birth because Christ has dealt decisively with sin and spiritual deadness by means of the cross and the empty tomb. To be made alive spiritually at the moment of regeneration is described in Ephesians 2 and Colossians 2 as “*being raised with Christ.*”

*But in these verses (19, 20 ff) the Apostle tells us something amazing about our new birth. “The same superhuman power was needed to make us believe, as was needed and exerted to raise Christ from the dead (vs. 20)” (JFB Commentary, 1 vol. p. 1282).*

Think of it, the magnitude of power necessary to raise Christ from the dead was also exerted by God when He reached down and saved you! This is tied to your knowledge of the Lord; it must sink in deeply; it must be perceived by the “eyes of your heart” that *a miracle of Almighty God was necessary to produce spiritual life and saving faith in you* (prior to your new birth, spiritually you were as dead as stinking Lazarus in his tomb).

Not only is the resurrection of Christ *the cause* for the new birth, resurrection is an *analogy* for the new birth (see Eph 2 and Col 2 a continuation of the same line or argument. Salvation analogies include: *creation, resurrection, and birth*). In each case there is not cooperation, but divine (unilateral) action upon dead matter, a dead creature, or an utterly dependent fetus).

*The new birth is a spiritual resurrection which joins us to Christ and seats us in the heavenlies. That is our destination—because of union with Christ it is the proper place we belong. But our right to be there, our qualification to be there, our fitness to be there is all due to our union with a Perfect Savior who is able to save to the uttermost (Heb 7:25).*

What a deep mystery; for our sakes, the only begotten Son of God lay in a dark stone tomb as a human corpse; the Creator of the universe a cadaver. Then He was raised with power (Rom 1:4) and seated above all authority. God, by means of the wounds of Christ, was conquering His enemies and ours. And our enemies were: *sin, death, hell, the world, the flesh, the devil, and the condemnation of God’s law.*

After His death on the cross, He went from a corpse to Ruler of the universe. He did all this to resurrect His eternal Bride, the Church. He had to span the chasm that lay between dust and glory; He had to span the chasm that lay between death and the throne of heaven so that we could go from dying to glorified. He had to span the gap between depravity and burning holiness so that we could go from rebels to worshippers.

This is why it says He is the Alpha and Omega: because He has first place in everything—as He says of Himself in Revelation 1:18, “*I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades.*” He has first place in everything (Col 1:18). He completely spans the infinite gap between self-existent holy God and defiled creature of dust.

By the sacrifice of Himself, Christ has dealt decisively with everything that separates us from God, and He has dealt decisively with everything that disqualifies us from eternal life and blessedness.

***God’s attributes were not put on display all at once until the work of Christ.***

Understanding this fact is an important ***access point*** to your growth in the knowledge of God. Here’s why, consider that God has literally harnessed His attributes and put them to work in your salvation.

Think of it—He is exercising His infinite love, wisdom, and power (which are all resident in Christ) in order to bring you to glory. ***God is exerting His attributes for His own glory; but also for your eternal welfare and glory.*** (APPL. This is so important to our topic. God wants you to grow in the knowledge of Him by seeing His attributes at work, ***harnessed in order to save you.***)

God can only be known in covenant because He dwells in burning holiness—the cherubim cover their faces as they call out holy, holy. God says *who would dare to risk his life by approaching me—I dwell in unapproachable light* (Jer 30:21; 1 Tim 6:16).

***God cannot be known and enjoyed apart from a place of safety – creating a place of safety is what He has done in placing us in Christ, our ‘City of Refuge’ (Heb 6:13-20).*** By His wisdom, power, and love, God has carved out a place of protection for us in the wounds, blood, and body of Christ. Christ is given to us as our ***covenant with God*** (Is 42:6; 49:8).

Let’s go even deeper – the unsearchable riches of the Godhead are put on display in Christ—which means that ***HOW God is taking the Church from dust to glory*** has become the primary revealer of the Godhead to the holy angels (Eph 3:8-10).

It says in 2 Peter 1:3-4 that the ***precious and magnificent promises*** of the Gospel are given to us ***out of*** (or by means of) God’s own glory and excellence. Thus the Gospel promises to forgive you and to adopt you in Christ are promises ***cast in the foundry of God’s attributes.*** ***God took His own attributes and poured them into the mould of the Gospel promises.***

(APPL. God wants you to know Him better and better as you take delight in all that He is toward you in Christ. Dwell upon Him as the God of all grace who is exercising His mighty attributes on your behalf. This makes you an ***owner***, not merely ***a spectator or observer.***)

God ***exports*** His life, love, blessedness, and righteousness across time and eternity and gives Himself to us in Christ. This is why at the moment of salvation (2 Cor 4:4-6) the believing sinner beholds God Almighty’s glory in the face of Christ. The sinner sees for the very first time WHO God is—that God plucks out His own heart (so to speak) in the giving of His Son in order

to reconcile hostile sinners to Himself. It's God's attributes harnessed in the Person and work of Christ in order to bring us to God.

When the sinner by faith beholds this display of divine love; it casts enmity out of his heart—it makes a friend of a former enemy (it reconciles – Col 1:21-22).

***When the sinner sees by faith that his own eternal welfare and God's glory are forever joined and bound up together in the Person of Christ—hostility toward God is purged from the sinner's heart; it's impossible for the former enmity to remain there.***

The exercise of God's immutable and glorious attributes (in the redemptive work of Christ) accomplishes not only your highest good (eternal salvation)—but it also is the highest form of God's self-revelation; this revelation of God in our behalf will redound to the eternal glory to God.

***The more that sinks in—the more delight you will have as you meditate upon who God is (it is always who God is toward you in Christ. It is always Christ's perfect suitability for our every need. It is always Christ who became to us wisdom from God, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Cor 1:30). Christ is the wisdom and power of God; He holds His offices of Prophet, Priest, and King in order to bring you to God.***

This is the truth of the Gospel which dispels lies about God; lies that kept the soul in its dark dungeon. Now that we are ***sons of light***; we find that we have communion with God when we take Christ for the reasons God gave Him (acceptance, forgiveness, righteousness, access). God is exalted when you keep taking Christ for the reasons God gave Him.

Listen to what Owen says in *Communion with God*, “We must assure ourselves that there is nothing more acceptable to God than to keep our hearts filled with him as the eternal source of all that rich grace which flows out to sinners in the blood of Jesus. Our resistance to walking close with God stems from the fact that we do not behold and receive his love. The more we see God's love by faith, the more will we delight in him” (Ibid, p. 32).

God's giving of himself as an all-sufficient God, to be enjoyed by his creatures, to provide for all their needs out of himself, is only revealed in Christ. In Christ, God is in covenant with his people to be a Father to them. In this covenant he has promised to lay out himself as the one who alone can meet the needs of his creatures. In Christ, God has promised to give himself to them for their eternal good and to be their exceedingly great reward (Ibid, p. 87).

***We must be convinced that God will use all his glorious attributes for our good. He has set forth Christ to be the Lord our Righteousness (Isaiah 45:24,25; 1 Cor. 1:30; 2 Cor. 5:18).*** We must be convinced that His attributes are powerful and able to bring us into eternal glory. To assure us of this, God wraps up the whole covenant of grace in one promise: “I will be your God.” Now we know that this Gospel covenant is confirmed in the blood of Christ. To be in Christ by faith is to know the wonder, excellence, wisdom and knowledge of God exercised in the salvation of sinners (Ibid, pp. 88-89).

Going to Christ as one's sin bearer is the believer's daily work. Christ calls the believer to daily lay the burden of their sins upon him. By faith the saints are to see God laying their sins

upon Christ. This is what it means to know Christ crucified. Believers draw near and take from Him that righteousness which he has wrought for them, so fulfilling what Paul taught (2 Cor. 5:21). Christ is delighted that his saints should always hold communion with him by giving him their sins and receiving his righteousness. We commune with Christ when we keep taking Him to be our righteousness (Ibid, p. 144).

**Vv. 21-23** – In these verses Paul declares the power of Christ over everything for the sake of the church. The living, ruling Christ pervaded the consciousness of the early church. The saints who made up the early church exhibited a fearless trust that nothing could stand in the way of their inheriting of the promises; for their Mediatorial King orders all things from His sovereign throne. This enabled them to witness with boldness and to face a martyr's death.

**CONCLUSION:** When we come to the place where we attempt to comprehend God and worship Him, our meditation must focus upon *HOW* God has revealed Himself—we must return to our passage (hope, inheritance, power).

God wants you to learn to pray personally for spiritual understanding; for it is God's way of furthering disclosures of Himself. It is God's way of moving from beholding to delight to worship. The benefits are so great; to have a proper estimate of your riches in Christ; to have a well-founded hope of salvation is the support and stability for the soul. A full Christ-centered assurance that the promises will be realized by you is a living sanctifying force!