



MESSAGE

STUDY GUIDE

GROUP MATERIAL

SONGS

Examining the text & our hearts:

Bible Reading: Eph. 1:17-21a

1. Paul's Prayer for the Believers

a. Praying for the Trinity to give wisdom & revelation (Eph. 1:17)

a. Paul's "prayer is an essential weapon in his...armory. Paul knows...he is engaged in a deadly spiritual warfare & needs to...use...the whole armor of God; he [applies] his own advice given in Eph. 6:18 [—so, he prays!]" [Peter T. O'Brien, Ephesians, p. 129]

a. The Trinity together gives wisdom & revelation

a. Paul prays that the Holy Spirit, whom they had already received, might impart "wisdom & revelation." This request is not for esoteric wisdom or new revelation but for a deeper understanding of God-of his will & saving purposes as revealed in Christ. (NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

b. To know the triune God & His mission

a. The Spirit of wisdom refers to the Holy Spirit's secret working in Christians to give them insights into God's Word and the saving knowledge of him (ESV Study Bible)

b. Praying for Heart Enlightenment (Eph. 1:18a)

a. Paul prays that believers will comprehend the blessings that are theirs in Christ: (ESV Study Bible)

c. It requires our whole heart – mind, will and spirit

a. The "heart" refers to the center of one's mind, will, and spirit. In essence, Paul prays that they will receive spiritual insight regarding three blessings that are theirs. (NIV Zondervan Study Bible)

b. "How do Christians grow in understanding? ...Some...pray & wait for illumination...Others make the opposite mistake: they use their minds & think but leave little room for the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul brings the two together...It is precisely as we use our minds to ponder what God has done in Christ that the Spirit will open our eyes to grasp its implications." [John Stott, Ephesians, p. 17]

a. Read, pray, study

b. Paul is not relying on his letter alone, he also prays for the Spirit to work

2. Pray What? Praying to Know 3 Things

a. "What will [the believers] specifically know...? The answer...is...3 clauses: '[1.] what is the hope of his calling, [2.] what is the wealth of his glorious inheritance in the saints, & [3.] what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe' (1:18b-19a)...Paul desires that they know [1.] the hope to which God has called them...[2.] the glorious inheritance that God possesses in them, & [3.] the great power of God working for them." [A. Kuruvilla, Eph., p. 43]

b. The hope of God's calling (Eph. 1:18b)

- a. This 'hope' is "The certain expectation for a glorious future (Rom. 5:2-5; Col. 1:27) with a cosmos that is united under Christ (Eph. 1:9-10); not a hopeful wish, but a confident expectation of what is to come since it is ultimately grounded on God's faithfulness. (NIV Zondervan Study Bible)
 - a. A certain & definite expectation
 - b. Earth & heaven united under Christ
 - c. Grounded in God's faithfulness
 - d. Christ in us the hope of glory – Col 1:27
 - e. The hope of our resurrection into the likeness of Christ – Phil. 3:21
 - a. "In the evangelical tradition the focus of this [Christian] hope was... 'going to heaven when we die'. However, N. T. Wright argues that "use of the word 'heaven' to denote the 'ultimate goal of the redeemed' [is] seriously misleading & does not do justice to the Christian hope...The NT vision of hope is not 'going to heaven when you die,' but about being 'bodily raised into the transformed glorious likeness of Jesus Christ'." [Alister E. McGrath Christian Theology: An Introduction, p. 438]
 - f. With present implications
 - a. "In Eph. 1:18 ????? [calling] 'is used in the sense of a call to a task, and so a missiological call. The calling in Ephesians is for the church to fulfill its role in the mission of God, to participate in the [mission of God]. 'God's mission flows from God to Christ to the Holy Spirit, who empowers the church, who carries on the mission to the world'." [Timothy van Aarde, "Relation of God's Mission & the Mission of the Church in Ephesians," *Missionalia*, Vol. 44, #3 (2016) p.]
- b. The riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints (Eph. 1:18c; Mal. 3:16-18)
 - a. We the believers are God's inheritance, his treasured possession
 - a. "Inheritance' here is "Probably not the believer's inheritance (Eph. 1:14), but God's inheritance comprising Jewish & Gentile believers. We are his treasured possession" (NIV Zondervan Study Bible)
 - b. The "inheritance" here is not the Christian's inheritance but his (i.e., God's). This indicates how precious his people are to God. They are, so to speak, what he looks forward to enjoying forever. (ESV Study Bible)
 - b. Our response to seeing ourselves as God's treasure – Mal. 3:16-18
 - a. "At that time those who feared the Lord spoke to one another. The LORD took notice & listened. So a book of remembrance was written before him for those who feared the LORD & had high regard for his name. 17 "They will be mine," says the Lord of Armies, "my own ['treasured' (ESV)] possession on the day I am preparing. I will have compassion on them as a man has compassion on his son who serves him. 18 So you will again see the difference between the righteous & the wicked, between one who serves God & one who does not serve him." (Mal. 3:16-18)
 - c. We need to see each other as God sees us – Num. 23:7-24; 1 Pet. 2:9
- c. God's immeasurably great power (Eph. 1:19-21)
 - a. "The first 2 clauses of Paul's prayer [1.] & [2.]...summarize what has already been covered in Eph. 1:3-14...Eph. 1:19 commences a new theme...the incredible power of God that is working on behalf of believers...1:19-23." [Abraham Kuruville, Eph., p. 44]
 - a. The power of Christ's resurrection & exaltation – 1:20
 - a. Paul uses multiple terms to emphasize the greatness of God's power that is presently available to believers. (NIV Zondervan Study Bible)
 - b. Paul piles up "power words" to express the immeasurable greatness of God's power, working, and great might toward believers. (ESV Study Bible)
 - c. "The decisive demonstration of divine power, Paul declares in Eph. 1:20 was the resurrection of Christ & his exaltation... The atonement does not figure here; it is all about the power of God exercised in the resurrection & exaltation of Jesus Christ." [Abraham Kuruville, Ephesians, pp. 44-45]
 - b. The power to overcome opposition to God's mission – 1:21
 - a. In Asia Minor many lived in dread of malign [hostile] spiritual beings & powers who dominated their lives. Paul prayed that his readers would have an experiential knowledge – the realization & confidence that as believers in Christ they possessed divine power. Christians need not cower in fear of any other spiritual powers. (Apologetics Study Bible)
 - b. "Few would deny the significance of [Eph. 6:10-20 for] divine warfare in Paul, but the motif of divine warfare can be traced back to earlier sections of [Ephesians] where Paul describes the lordship of Jesus (Eph. 1:20-23) and the conflict between God and Satan through the work of the cross (Eph. 2:1-22)...[plus] the earlier sections in which Paul describes the power of the Gospel message." [David W. Pao, "Holy War" and the Universal God," in R. R Cook (ed.) *After Imperialism: Christian Identity...*, p. 118]
 - c. "Paul wrote Ephesians to...Gentile Christians [who] lived in a world where...power...belonged to 'rulers,' 'authorities,' 'world rulers,' & 'spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places' (Eph. 6:12; 2:2). They could see signs of it...in...statues, [wall] friezes, & inscriptions in the markets &...street corners...The gods, this propaganda proclaimed, had given Rome the eternal right to govern the universe. To...readers...perhaps Paul's own troubles [in prison (Eph. 3:13)] were...a reminder [of] such a world. Paul wrote...to encourage them...Through his anointed king Jesus, he had already triumphed over all the 'spiritual forces of evil in heavenly places' (Eph. 1:20-22a) & had made available to his people the same power that brought Jesus...victory...& [Paul hoped] to encourage them in their battle with the forces of evil around them (Eph. 6:10-20)." [Frank S. Thielman, "Ephesians," in G. K. Beale, D. A. Carson (eds.) *Commentary on the NT use of the OT*, p. 813]
 - c. The resurrection power to overcome our dead status – Eph. 2:1, 4
 - d. The exalting & enthroning power that brings everything under subjection to Christ – 1:22
 - e. The power that enables the church to join God's mission – 1:22
 - a. "The 'surpassing greatness of his power' (Eph 1:19) is for more than a personal...salvation...–an individualistic reading of the text. The power is 'for us the believing ones,' i.e., it is for the Church to fulfill its mission...the surpassing power is given for a specific purpose, 'for us,' the Church

to be able complete or fulfill its 'calling' (Eph 1:18)." [Timothy van Aarde, "Relation of God's mission &...the church...in Ephesians," Missionalia, Vol. 44, #3 (2016) p.]