

Ephesians 1:19-23 NLT - 19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. 21 Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else--not only in this world but also in the world to come. 22 God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. 23 And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.

God's power is available to us. This power is greater than all things. It overpowered sin and death, it elevated Jesus to a heavenly throne, and put all things under his authority. God made Jesus the head over all things, and we, the church, are his body. By the power of His Holy Spirit our lives can be transformed.

Our challenge is to allow God's power to transform us and empower us to overcome our struggles. What area do you most want to see God's power transform your life? Pray for one another to receive God's power in that area now.

WRAP-UP

Paul reminded the Ephesians of God's glorious grace and kindness offered through His forgiveness and adoption of all who believe in Christ. He prayed that they would grow in their knowledge of God and His incredible power and in their understanding of themselves as God's holy people, and to hold confidently to the promise of a glorious inheritance.

MEMORY VERSE.

19 I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power 20 that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms.
- Ephesians 1:19-20 NLT

PRAYER (20 MIN) Ask your group to pray for you regarding one area where you can apply this study in your life

Challenge.- Set aside time this week to read slowly through chapter 1 of Ephesians and reflect on the Good News and the power of Christ in you.

“Greater Than All Things”

Prison Letters- #1

INTRODUCTION

This summer we will be studying the letters written by Paul while he was imprisoned in Rome. Of the 27 books in the New Testament, Paul authored over half, and four of those he penned as a prisoner. Knowing this we should view these four letters as giving us a unique insight. Undoubtedly, they were conveying what Paul thought was vital information to those he cared for deeply as he faced an uncertain future. In this study we begin with a look at the first chapter of Ephesians in which Paul conveys some of the most important truths of the gospel.

Ice Breaker

If you could only write four letters in the remainder of your lifetime, who would you send them to?

Key Passage

Ephesians 1:9-10 NLT - 9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. 10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ--everything in heaven and on earth.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. Spiritual Blessings

Paul begins his letter by identifying himself as an Apostle (a messenger or one sent out), and the Ephesians as faithful followers of Jesus. Despite his circumstances of being a prisoner, Paul begins by praising God for spiritual blessings.

What does Paul refer to in Eph 1:4-6 that would be considered spiritual blessings to Christ's followers? When did these blessings occur? What does that tell you about your ability to earn God's blessing?

Ephesians 1:3-5 NLT - 3 All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ. 4 Even before he made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. 5 God decided in advance to adopt us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. This is what he wanted to do, and it gave him great pleasure.

Summarize in your own words how our relationship to Christ affects our receiving God's blessing and forgiveness (verses 6-10). What do you see as the plan that brings God pleasure?

Ephesians 1:6-10 NLT - 6 So we praise God for the glorious grace he has poured out on us who belong to his dear Son. 7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding. 9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. 10 And this is the plan: At the right time he will bring everything together under the authority of Christ--everything in heaven and on earth.

2. God's Plan- The Good News

Ephesians 1:12-14 NLT - 12 God's purpose was that we Jews who were the first to trust in Christ would bring praise and glory to God. 13 And now you Gentiles have also heard the truth, the Good News that God saves you. And when you believed in Christ, he identified you as his own by giving you the Holy Spirit, whom he promised long ago. 14 The Spirit is God's guarantee that he will give us the inheritance he promised and that he has purchased us to be his own people. He did this so we would praise and glorify him.

Paul reminds the Ephesians that the pouring out of the Holy Spirit was prophesied long ago. (see Joel 2:28) Jews were the first to see this happen at Pentecost. Now the Gentiles were experiencing the same filling of God's Spirit and Paul points out that this is Good News and was God's plan all along. It erased the boundary lines between Jew and Gentile in God's eyes. By verse 14 Paul includes Jew and Gentile when he says God would give "us" the inheritance and the "we" should praise and glorify God.

What is the Good News about who God desires to save? What "guarantee" does God give us as evidence of our salvation and our future inheritance?

3. Knowing God, Knowing Ourselves

Ephesians 1:17 NLT - 17 asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.

What do we need in order to grow in our knowledge of God? Where will that come from?

Our God is infinitely complex, and so we may find it daunting to attempt to grow in our knowledge of Him. It is true that we are limited in our ability to comprehend the God of the Universe. But there will always be new ways for God to reveal himself and increase our understanding of who He is. We should never stop seeking to know God more.

What is required to understand who we are as God's holy people?

Ephesians 1:18 NLT - 18 I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called--his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.

Verse 18 indicates we need light in our hearts to realize the confident hope we have in Christ. How do we let God's light into our hearts and what would hinder us from being filled with God's light?