

**THE CHURCH ON OFFENSE IN
CONFLICTED DAYS
FALL/WINTER 2020/2021
“PRAYING FOR THE CHURCH TO BE EMPOWERED”
NOVEMBER 25, 2020
ACTS 19, 20:17-38 and other selected support Scriptures**

I. PAUL'S PREPARATION OF THE EPHESIANS

- A. He held back nothing that was PROFITABLE v. 20*
- B. He testified that the gospel was about REPENTANCE TOWARD GOD and FAITH TOWARD THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. That means that they would have to change their mind about who the Sovereign One was and put their trust in the Son of the Sovereign One, the Lord Jesus Christ v. 27*
- C. He testified of the GOSPEL OF THE GRACE OF GOD v. 24*
- D. The main focus of his preaching was PROCLAIMING THE KINGDOM OF GOD. v.25*
- E. He declared to them the WHOLE COUNSEL (WILL, PURPOSE, INTENT, DESIRE) OF GOD.*
- F. He trusted God with them, encouraging them to guard themselves against the FALSE TEACHERS and FALSE TEACHING that was going to come.*

II. PAUL DEMONSTRATES THIS IN HIS LETTER

- A. Pastor Al taught this last week as he taught through Eph. 1:3-14*
 - 1. The whole counsel of God*
 - 2. The grace of God in election and predestination*
- B. Tonight we look at his prayer for them and how it too reflected his teaching and concern for them Eph 1:15-23 (Read aloud)*
 - 1. His **recognition** of their status as children of God - three evidences of the new birth and the Spirit living in them: Faith, hope and love v 15*
 - a. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ*
 - b. Love for all the saints*
 - c. Where is the hope? This is part of the target of his prayer v 18*
 - 2. His **thanksgiving** (to God) of this status in which God had elected them by His grace and they had received that grace. Evidenced by the above (vv 3-15)*
 - a. Thanksgiving is the word, eucharistia or good grace. This is the acknowledgement that God's good grace or favor had been*

shown toward these who are now saints. Saints are the sanctified ones or those set apart by God for some favor He is going to show them. Obviously to be set apart by God is already His great favor. He has by His grace chosen them for an inheritance in Christ.

- b. He is grateful for ALL the saints, not just the ones in his “love group”; not just the ones who are Cardinals and Blues fans! It is a total miracle anyone is ever born again! We cannot do that for ourselves. That is the supernatural work of God and God alone. Since we cannot give ourselves the new birth we must see that only God could give a new life to anyone else. John, the apostle in the 1st verse of the fifth chapter of his first epistle says that whoever is born again will also love whoever is born again by God. This is part of the *WHOLE COUNSEL OF GOD*.
 - c. *APPLICATION*: You did not choose your brothers and sisters in the natural life and you do not choose your brothers and sisters in the faith either! You *DO CHOOSE* how you will receive them and treat them. As you can see Paul did not discriminate about his family members; he is grateful for them all. Gratitude turns even those who have not yet grown well enough to be enjoyable into God’s gift of love to us. New eyes are given in thanksgiving. New appreciation comes through better vision!
3. His **prayer request** to the God of the Lord Jesus Christ (witness here the powerful and essential doctrinal statement, that Jesus, the human being, is God’s Son, that He is Lord, that He is Christ) and Father of glory (another powerful statement of God’s authority and sovereignty as the source of the whole of the cosmos, His glory). This is a powerful statement that what Paul was bringing was not another philosophical movement of smart men on the earth. What He brought to them was the revelation of God to them. That they responded to it was proof of the illumination by God to them. Our revealed faith is not simply another intellectual philosophy created by men in dialogue with one another but one revealed to us from God. **Paul is asking that the God who had begun the revelation of Himself to these mortals living in Ephesus**
 - a. Our faith is a **revealed** faith; it is given to us by God. We do not simply arrive at it by meditating on a hill somewhere and

contemplating our condition and the solution to it. **God must make known to us Himself, what He is doing, who is the Christ, that judgment is coming and how to be saved from it.** Because we were dead in trespasses and sins and could not, would not come to Him, if He did not come to us to reveal Himself to us we would perish forever in ignorance of Him.

b. But his acknowledgment of their condition, his awareness of it having lived with them was proof positive of God's active revelation to them of the faith in Christ. But he had heard their hope was diminishing (v. 18 and no mention of it in v. 15) and was now seeking from God a continued revelation that they could stand against the false teachers who would muddle the sound of true teaching, the simplicity of Christ. Hope diminishes when Christ's purpose in saving us and its importance are dimmed by the uncertainties of our salvation or the detours of worthless teachings. Now to the specifics of what he was looking for from God.

1b. He was asking God **to give them the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ.**

2b. This would fortify them against false teachers; reenforce them in their knowledge of the Christ; give them a clear hope of the coming kingdom. But it would have an even clearer purpose

3b. The **purpose** Paul sought in requesting this was that **the eyes of their understanding would be opened for three ends: 1) that they may know the hope of His calling them 2) what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints and 3) and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe**

4b. Let's break these down further: To know the hope of His calling them. What is the reason Christ called us in the first place? Can He pull it off? In other words, what is the basis of our confidence (hope)? What can the Spirit reveal to us that helps us to know whether Christ is capable of wresting the rule of earth away from the prince of the power of the air, the god of this age, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience and wrath who are subject to him always? What keeps Christ from being just another mythology,

legend, or saga of the type already floating around the idolatrous nations around the world? In other writings Paul had already warned believers and pastors to not get involved with mythologies, genealogies and old wives fables since they were dead end streets. By trying to understand the Christ in terms of the already existing mythologies will reduce Him one of the pantheon of gods existing in their world. In our world, making the study of Christ one of the comparative religions of the world reduces both His humanity and His divinity. He is now an unreal figment of imagination to be dealt with any way we wish. Only the revelation of God, the confirmation of His Holy Spirit can make this alive to those who believe. This is Paul's prayer. Remember that Ephesus was an idolatrous city that dealt in magic and exorcisms due to the large demonic presence there. Our calling is of a kingdom reality that was on its way in Christ. They were in need of confidence in that.

5b. This spirit of wisdom and revelation was to show them the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. The Word of God, the second person of the trinity is the person through whom the Father created all things. All things were created through Him and for Him. He was before all things and in Him all things consist. It is His. He is both God and man in one person. That makes Him unique in all the world of the gods. He was righteous and faithful in all He did. He was crucified for our sins. Other of the gods fought and some were killed by a foe but their death was not in behalf of others to give them eternal life. He was raised from the dead. Other gods were raised also but it was for themselves not for the sake of giving others eternal life with Him. He is the first born, the only begotten of God; He is the first born of the dead. He is the inheritor of all He made for He is the one who reconciled it back to the Kingdom of God. As man, He redeemed the earth and its believing people. As God, He reconciled the kingdom of heaven back to the kingdom of God! His inheritance is shared with the saints and we need to see that inheritance to keep our hope alive. Only the Spirit of God can speak to the depths of our spirits and give us that assurance. Our

spirits were created by God and only He can speak to the heart of that spirit to give us assurance.

6b. The prayed for spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him was to thirdly bring us the content of what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe. This power was the same power that raised up Christ from the dead AND then seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. Paul had seen Jesus at the right hand of the Father in the heavenlies. That places Him, the god/man, in the highest executive office in the whole cosmos. A human being is at the right hand of God! It is the power of God that raised Him from the dead and seated Him at the right hand. What human would be stupid or arrogant enough to dare to take such a place for himself. Only God could put Him there! That makes Jesus pre-eminent over all humanity. That same power that was at work in Jesus to do all of that is at work in any of them. This is in stark contrast to the exorcists and magicians they were accustomed to seeing. This was beyond any worship of Diana that had ever gone on in any of their ecstatic ceremonies there. Paul wanted the Ephesians to have their knowledge sealed, their spirits fortified and their witness empowered by the resurrection power of the Lord Jesus Christ!

7b. Once Paul has started down the path of exalting Jesus his tendency to doxologies was on the tip of his tongue. So their faith would be further galvanized that Jesus was unlike any god to which they might decide to liken him, he declares that Jesus is far beyond any of those principalities or powers or might or dominion or any name (reputation for greatness) whether in the past, the present or the future. Jesus defies comparison. All other stories, embellished or not have no ground of worthiness to be considered in the same discussion with Jesus. The Father has put all things, including all principalities, powers, might, dominion, names, humans, kings, angels, the dead and the living under the feet of Jesus. He is the head of the church. The fulness of the godhead bodily. He is Lord. Therefore stand!