

WORDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT AND HOPE

A Study of Paul's Letters to the Thessalonians and the Ephesians

MEDITATE: *Ephesians 1:1-14*

Quiet your heart before the Lord. This does not necessarily mean that your environment needs to be silent, although this can be helpful. Set aside a time free from distractions to focus on the passage as you read and meditate on it.

These instructions may help you develop a method for meditating on our passage each week. You may want to incorporate all or some of these ideas, whatever is helpful.

- ❖ Read the passage, slowly and prayerfully asking the Lord to speak to you from his word. Take several minutes to mull over the passage.
- ❖ Read the passage aloud and again take several minutes to give careful thought to it.
- ❖ Listen to the passage being read aloud. You may want to have someone else read it to you, or use a Bible program such as biblegateway.com or YouVersion, a free Bible app.
- ❖ Read the passage in other translations.

Finally, consider the following questions:

What words or phrases stand out to me? Why?

What questions does the passage raise that I want to know more about?

MEDITATE

“Grace is why God sent his Son into this world, to do for us what we could not do for ourselves—to transform us from what we are (sinners separated from him) into what we are becoming (Christ-like and with him forever).”

—Paul Tripp

PREPARATION: *Read Acts 19—20 for a description of the events that occurred while Paul was in Ephesus.*

DIG IN: *Read Ephesians 1:1-14.*

1. In verse 1a, Paul identifies himself as an _____ of Christ Jesus by _____.

APOSTLE: “An apostle was one appointed by the Lord to be a recipient and authenticator of the New Testament revelation. As Paul said in writing to the Corinthians, he was one who spoke ‘not in words taught... by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit’ (1 Cor. 2:13).”¹

THE WILL OF GOD: Read the story of Paul's conversion in Acts 9:1-19. In Ephesians, “Paul's emphasis does not lie so much on the fact that he was an apostle, as wonderful as that was, but on how he became one. It was not by his own will but ‘by the will of God.’ Indeed, if it had not been for God's sovereign and efficacious will, Paul would not only not have been an apostle, he would not even have been a Christian. Left to himself apart from the grace of God, he fought against God and attempted to destroy his church.”²


In your own words, how do both of these descriptions add to the importance we give to what he has written in this letter?

2. Paul addresses the Ephesian believers in verse 1b as “holy,” “faithful,” and “in Christ.” Look at the following verses. What insight do they give us about these attributes?

Holy (Heb. 2:11)

Faithful (Gal. 5:22)

In Christ (Gal. 2:20)

3. God the Father “has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (v. 3). Examine verses 4-10, and wherever God is the subject (the doer of the action), note what he has done for us.
4. “The Greek word for *adoption to sonship* [v. 5] is a legal term referring to the full legal standing of an adopted male heir in Roman culture.”³ Why does God give us this status? (vv. 5b-6a;  * Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6-7)
5. What two things have we received through Jesus Christ, “the One [God] loves” (v. 6)? (v. 7)
6. What words and phrases from verses 3-9 reveal the attitude or heart of God toward his Son and toward us?

What does your list suggest about our God?

7. In verse 10 Paul is alluding to the return of Christ at the end of time. What does Paul say will happen then? (v. 10; Col. 1:15, 19-20)

THE MYSTERY OF HIS WILL

“**Mystery** as used in scripture... refers to the revelation of something that was previously hidden or known only vaguely but now is more fully made known.... The mystery of God’s will, now revealed **in Christ**, is ‘to unite all things in him’ (Eph. 1:10...)”⁴

8. Using the table below, outline the blessings of verses 13-14.

Verse	What Happens?	When Does It Happen?	What Does This Signify?
v. 13a			
v. 13b-14			

9. This passage refers four times to “his will” (vv. 1, 5, 9, 11) and three times to “the praise of his glory” or “the praise of his glorious grace” (vv. 6, 12, 14). What do these phrases reveal to you about God?
10. Look again at the Meditate box at the beginning of the lesson. Review this week’s passage and consider all that God has done for you that you could not do for yourself.

PAUSE TO WORSHIP

Re-read Ephesians 1:1-14. Take time to interact with the Lord about the passage.

“Once we’ve meditated to focus, understand, and remember, we will normally find our hearts inclined to worship. So, we pause to lift our gaze to the excellencies of Christ, to bend our eyes off of the world, to express thanksgiving and adoration when we pray. Meditation leads to delight when the Holy Spirit inclines our hearts to see and savor how glorious God is.”⁵

- ❖ How do I respond to the beauty I see in God’s will, work, and ways in this passage?

- ❖ In what ways do I see Jesus, “the One [God] loves” (v. 6), more clearly through this passage?

- ❖ Is there a song or hymn that comes to mind that helps express my response to the passage?


(You may wish to listen to “Come Praise and Glorify,” Words by Tim Chester, Music by Bob Kauflin, © 2011 Sovereign Grace Praise [BMI]. <<https://youtu.be/g1PvNUc7Wk>>)

REFLECT & PRAY

- ❖ How can I take what I’m learning from this passage and make it my own? Is there something specific to believe, do, not do, be grateful for, etc.?

- ❖ How does this passage help me see myself and others differently?

- ❖ Pray the passage: Use the passage as a basis to talk to God about the things you are learning, seeing, and longing for as well as ways the passage speaks to your current life experiences.

* Indicates passages for further study

¹ Boice, James Montgomery, *Ephesians: an Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2003), 4.

² Boice, 4.

³ Footnote “b” for Ephesians 1:5 for the New International Version in <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians+1%3A5&version=NIV>

⁴ Dennis, Lane T. and Grudem, Wayne, eds., *The ESV Study Bible* (Wheaton: Crossway Bibles, 2008), page 2263 note on Ephesians 1:9.

⁵ <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/5-steps-to-meditating-on-your-bible/>