

Reading Schedule for January 14-20, 2019

You will appreciate the significance of this letter because it lays the foundation for our Christian faith. What does it mean to be “in Christ?” The Apostle Paul tells us in the first three chapters of this letter. On Saturday, we will transition into the implications this marvelous presentation of Christian doctrine, that is the foundation on which to build, with Christ being the cornerstone.

January 14 – Ephesians 1:15-23: “I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people . . .” (v.18) I know this isn’t a sentence. In fact, verses 15 – 23 are one sentence, just like the previous section. But I saw the word “hope” jump off the page. As you know, hope is not a vague feeling that the future will be positive, but it is the assurance of complete victory through God. This complete certainty comes to us through the Holy Spirit, who is working in us. We know that truth from Romans 5:5. I encourage you to look it up to remind yourself about the love of God poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit. And what does that give us? Hope. There is more in verse 18 that is compelling. He wants our spiritual eyes to see the truth, and this will give us great confidence and empower us to live the Christian life. This is a marvelous prayer. What stands out to you from this prayer?

January 15 – Ephesians 2:1-10: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God . . .” (v.8) Some have suggested that this is the most powerful expression of the Gospel in all the Bible. Again, this section is one sentence in the origin Greek. The overarching theme is that God lavishes his grace on us through the saving work of Jesus Christ. We were hopeless and helpless without Christ. We were dead, and through Christ we have been made alive. Obviously that is the idea of being born again. This is a gift from God, as we read in verse 8. There are so many aspects of this paragraph that inspire me, like verse 6, where it says I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. That is a spiritual reality that when I remember that truth it gives me great assurance. How do you respond to this marvelous sentence on the Gospel?

January 16 – Ephesians 2:11-22: “For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.” (v.18) Again, there are many aspects of this section that get my attention. But I have to admit that the word “access” jumped out to me. It reminds me of Hebrews, where we can approach God’s throne of grace with confidence. It reminds me of Romans 5:2, where it says we have gained access, and now we stand secure, past, present, and future. To draw near to God and to enjoy him forever is a marvelous truth. The wall that divided us has been demolished. This is both in our connection with Christ, and our connection to each other. Loving God and loving our neighbor is the essence of our response to the grace of God. This section ends with us being knit together, as a dwelling of God through his Spirit. I have found these readings in Ephesians especially inspiring, even though I am well aware of the teaching. It is so good to absorb again the marvel of what God has done for us. How do you respond to the freedom we have in approaching God?

January 17 – Ephesians 3:1-13: “This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus.” (v.6) This mystery is now revealed. Christ has come to unify Jew and Gentile in one body through the Gospel. This was foretold by the prophets, and now has become a reality through Jesus. The marvel of this Gospel is unveiled

through Christ and is for all people. The reason it was a mystery is that it was not clear to the people of God previously how inclusive our God wants to be concerning the gift of his Son. This was a huge barrier to overcome, and many Jews did not actually believe it. He is presenting the Gospel in a new light and giving us thoughtful words to contemplate. As you meditate on these verses, what stands out to you? I want you to remember the incredible privilege we have to be living now, because the Gospel is clearly seen for the wonder that it is. The mystery has been unveiled.

January 18 – Ephesians 3:14-21: “. . . may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ . . .” (v.18) I know this verse is not a complete sentence, but it is an aspect of the prayer that I think of often. I think I’ve told you that this is my favorite prayer in the Bible. The Lord’s Prayer is amazing, and Jesus prayed some profound truth in John 17, but this stands out to me as something that I need for myself, and that I can pray for others. As this prayer is answered, great things happen in the lives of people who I am praying for. This is all about deepening our relationship with Christ so that we are filled to the fullness of God. This is the journey of the Christian faith, and what it means to be Christlike. You cannot be Christlike on your own strength and effort. It must be the work of the Holy Spirit. So he says you are strengthened through the power of the Holy Spirit in your inner being. These insights are so important to your own spiritual growth and so effective when we pray them for others. What is your favorite part of this prayer?

January 19 – Ephesians 4:1-13: “As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.” (v.1) I told you that there would be a transition as we came to chapter 4 about living out the wonder of our Christian faith. Based on the truths that he has been teaching, how should we now live? This means we live out the awesome privilege of being a follower of Christ, which includes humility, gentleness, patience, understanding, and passion. People are watching your life. Can they see Christ in you? We are his representatives. We cannot do this alone because much of this is connected to our belonging to each other. In other words, the unity we have in Christ. He has given us gifts, and we utilize those gifts for the benefit of others. Verse 12 happens to be my job description as called by God to be a Pastor. This is why I prepare this reading schedule – so that you might be more equipped in you walk with Christ, and in your testimony to others.

January 20 – Ephesians 4:14-24: “You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds . . .” (v. 22 & 23) Our old way of life, before we believed in Christ, is completely in the past. We should put it behind us, like old clothes to be thrown away. This obviously a decision we made in the past, but it also is a daily discipline as the flesh is put aside, and the life of the Spirit is fanned. If you are reading this at the beginning of the day, I want you to respond to these verses by spiritually putting on the clothing of Christ so that you might live as children of light. This is a very helpful exhortation of putting off and putting on. In fact, it is similar to our theme for this year . . . less fear, more hope. I want you to put on hope today, the kind that breathes confidence into your soul.

PRAYER: Pray Ephesians 3:16-19 for a different person each day this week.