

The Apostolic Call

Called to Prayer - Called to Equip - Called to Send

6.28.26

Ephesians 1:7-12 ESV

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth in him. In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will, so that we who were the first to hope in Christ might be to the praise of his glory.

Ephesians 3:7-12 ESV

Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the

eternal purpose that he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

[apostle] a person sent by another; a messenger; envoy. This word is once used as a descriptive designation of Jesus Christ, the Son, sent of the Father. It is, however, generally used to designate the body of disciples to whom he entrusted the organization of his church and the dissemination of his gospel.¹

[apostolic] "Apostolic" is derived from the Greek word "*apostolos*", or "*apostolokos*" meaning "one who is sent out" or "messenger."

Biblical History and Foundation

The foundation of Apostolic ministry is rooted in the New Testament, where Jesus Himself appointed the twelve apostles. In the Gospel of Mark, Yeshua calls the twelve to be with Him and to be sent out to preach: "*He appointed twelve whom He designated as apostles, to accompany Him, to be sent out to preach*" (Mark 3:14). The apostles were entrusted with the authority to pray, teach, perform miracles, and lead the early Christian community.

Apostolic Authority and Succession

¹ M. G. Easton, Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), 48.

The authority of the apostles is evident in their role as foundational leaders of the first Christian Church. In Ephesians 2:20, Paul describes the Church as being "*built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.*" This highlights the significance of apostolic teaching and leadership in the establishment and growth of the Church.

The concept of apostolic succession is the belief that the authority given to the apostles by Christ has been passed down through successive generations of church leaders. This succession is seen as a means of preserving the integrity and continuity of the apostolic tradition of prayer, equipping, and sending out.

Apostolic Teaching and Doctrine

Apostolic teaching is characterized by adherence to the doctrines and practices taught by the apostles, as recorded in the New Testament. The early Church devoted itself to the apostles' teaching, as evidenced in Acts 2:42: "*They devoted themselves to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.*" This commitment to apostolic doctrine is considered essential for maintaining the purity and unity of the faith.

Apostolic Signs and Miracles

The apostles were endowed with the ability to perform signs and miracles as a testament to their divine commission. In Acts 5:12, it is recorded that *"the apostles performed many signs and wonders among the people."* These miraculous acts served to confirm the truth of their message and the authority of their mission.

Apostolic Mission and Evangelism

The apostolic mission is characterized by a commitment to evangelism and the spread of the Gospel to all nations. Jesus' Great Commission to the apostles in Matthew 28:19-20 underscores this mission: *"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you."* The apostles' dedication to this mission laid the groundwork for the global proliferation of Christianity.

Apostolic Unity and Fellowship

Unity and fellowship among believers are central to the apostolic vision for the Church. The apostles emphasized the importance of maintaining unity in the body of Christ, as seen in Paul's exhortation in Ephesians 4:3-4: *"Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit."* This unity is fostered through shared faith, communal worship, and mutual support.

The Apostolic Legacy

The legacy of the apostles continues to influence the Church today through the New Testament writings, which serve as the authoritative source of Christian doctrine and practice. The apostolic foundation remains a vital aspect of the Church's identity, guiding believers in faith, worship, and mission.²

Part One - The Apostolic Call to Prayer

Ephesians 1:15-20

“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also 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 the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms.”

² Topical Analysis of the Bible General Editor Walter A. Elwell Associate Editor Douglas Buckwalter © 1991 by Baker Book House Company ISBN: 0-8010-0067-X

Selected by God to establish the foundation of the church, the apostles did so by bearing witness to the resurrected Christ, by their prayers, their teaching, and by their sending.

The apostles were recognized and formidable in their prayer and intercession. When there was a need to provide for the widows in the early church, the apostles couldn't do it because they had to devote themselves to "*prayer and the ministry of the word.*"

Acts 6:4 ESV

"But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word."

When the leaders of the church at Antioch were fasting and praying, the Holy Spirit told them to set apart Paul and Barnabas for the ministry God had called them to.

Acts 13:1-3 ESV

Now there were in the church at Antioch prophets and teachers, Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen, a lifelong friend of Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "*Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.*" Then, after fasting and praying, they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

This was, in reality, the beginning of Paul's missionary journeys. In addition, in the apostle Paul's epistles to churches, he often begins by sharing that he has been praying for them.

Romans 1:9-10 ESV

For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

Philippians 1:4-6 ESV

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all, making my prayer with joy, because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:9-12

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and

patience with joy; giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

One thing is very clear: praying for God's church - interceding on behalf of God's people was significant to laying in place the apostolic foundation and traditions. Although the foundation of the Church has long since been established and the apostles of the historic early Church have passed on, the Biblical principles and traditions of apostolic ministry remain successive and entirely relevant, particularly in the area of prayer. God wants to use us to establish, equip, and build his church through prayer. To begin our understanding of the apostolic process, let's go back to our foundational passage.

Ephesians 1:15-21

For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.

As we unpack this segment of the great letter from the apostle Paul to the remarkable churches in the region of Ephesus (75 to 100k members), we can learn timeless principles of apostolic prayer—prayer that establishes, equips, and builds up God’s church. To do this, let’s first ask two informative questions.

Questions we must ask:

How can we develop and deepen an apostolic prayer life? *By returning to the Biblical template and original apostolic model that Jesus Himself established and instructed for the New Testament Church.*

What active and relevant principles can be exegeted (drawn) and contextualized (practiced) from Ephesians 1:15-20? *Simply put, we pray, we equip, we send.*

Apostolic Prayer Comes from an Informed, Compassionate, and Constantly Righteous Heart

[Verses 15-16]

“For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.”

While Paul was in prison, he was informed of the Ephesians' extraordinary faith and their love for all the saints. It must be noted that faith and love are

two of the essential marks of genuine conversion and life-changing transformation in Christ; “*now these three remain, faith, hope, and love*. Those who truly have faith in Christ are new creations; old things have passed away, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17). Jesus instructs that one of the new things in the life of a true believer is love for other believers.

John 13:34-35

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.”

If we do not love our fellow believers, then we have not passed - we cannot pass as the Scripture says from death to life.

1 John 3:14

“We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love our brothers. Anyone who does not love remains in death”

After hearing that kind of intense and direct instruction, we must also include the access point to the very love that allows us passage from death to life...

Romans 5:5

“God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.”

The believers in Ephesus had surely experienced this outpouring of love; they were moved by the Holy Spirit to love “*all the saints*”—not just the lovable and good ole’ folks of their local church communities or cities, but all the saints—everywhere, all the time. Their love for God and one another was evident in their faith - the Church of Jesus was being indisputably transformed by God.

One of the things that should be noted about Ephesians 1:15 is the way in which Paul writes, “*ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus.*” He appears to say that he had never met these believers before. The problem with this is that, according to Acts 20:31, Paul had spent at least three years in Ephesus. With this understanding, we can conclude that this letter was written not only to the Ephesians but also to several other congregations in Asia Minor.

Let’s look to define and understand the significance and impact of apostolic prayer that is Informed, Concerned, and Constant.

I. Apostolic Prayer is Informed

Paul prays with gratitude because he has heard about the faith and love of these saints. It is hard to pray for things we know nothing about.

To cultivate our prayer lives, we must seek to be informed. This might include asking others for their prayer requests so we can constantly lift them up. It could include reading and watching the news so we can know how to pray for our nation and for the world in general. No doubt Paul is implying the need to be informed in Ephesians 6:18: *“Be alert and always keep on praying for all the saints.”* We must be alert, aware, informed, and wisely literate to problems, substantial events, and instances of spiritual warfare so that we can pray for all the saints. *Eyes wide open, heart kept tender, spirit made ready, wise to the purpose and fulfillment of God’s eternal Word.*

If we do not stay informed, we will not be able to pray as we must.

II. Apostolic Prayer is Compassionate

Another aspect of Paul’s apostolic prayer is his care for the Ephesians—he has “not stopped giving thanks” for them. He is thankful for the Ephesians’ spiritual attainments and successes, which reveal much about his heart. Many do not rejoice when others succeed, whether spiritually, socially, or vocationally. Rather, a spirit of jealousy, cynicism, or anger grows within, making one incapable of true prayer. We must have a compassionate and concerned heart to pray both right and righteously.

Ephesians 3:14-19 ESV

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through

his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

We must truly want the best for others. We must desire that they know God and excel at work, church, school, and in their relationships. This is the type of heart needed to pray. Sadly, this is the reason many of us do not pray. We are simply not as compassionate toward others as we should be, and are far too concerned with ourselves. Let's change that narrative as we pray.

III. Apostolic Prayer is Constant

Paul's own prayers were constant, and he commands all believers to "*Pray without ceasing*" (1 Thessalonians 5:17). We see this constancy in his prayers for the Colossians, the Romans, and the Ephesians.

Colossians 1:9

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Romans 1:9-10

God, whom I serve with my whole heart in preaching the gospel of his Son, is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times; and I pray that now at last by God's will the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Paul was constantly praying for the church, and this should be true of us as well. But how can we practice constant prayer—prayer without ceasing? Does this mean that we never stop praying all day long?

Not necessarily. The Greek phrase translated as “without ceasing” in ancient literature was also used to describe a “hacking cough.” When a person has a bad cough, it is not that he never stops coughing. It's that he coughs all day—the cough keeps coming back. We must do the same with our prayers. Throughout the day, we must constantly remember before God the church, our neighbors, our co-workers, our leaders, and the lost in general. Prayer must be our constant endeavor and focus throughout the day.

7.5.26

The Apostolic Call to Prayer [Continued]

IV. Apostolic Prayer Prioritizes Knowing Who God Is

Ephesians 1:17

I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, ***so that you may know him better.***

In Christ, we build the foundation of our faith on the Biblical revelation and knowledge of who God is. The increasing revelation and knowledge of God is constantly prioritized in the apostolic prayer life of the follower of Christ.

When we pray, we should acknowledge:

God's Paradoxical Sovereignty (*First and Last - The Firstborn Among the Dead - Even though you die; yet will you live*)

God's Eternal Glory (*And of Your Kingdom There Will Be No End - From Everlasting to Everlasting You are God*)

God's Distinctive Exclusivity (*Among the gods there is none like you, Lord; no deeds can compare with yours - Lord There Is None Like You*)

God's Holy Righteousness (*Hakkadosh Baruckh Hu - The Holy One Blessed Be He - You show Yourself Holy and Righteous*).

For example, we pray: God is Father, God is Son, and God is Spirit (Father God, You are Three and yet in Unity You are One); **God is Creator** (Father, You have created all things and in You all things exist; When You Speak You Create and when You Create You Speak); **God is Almighty** (Father, with You nothing is impossible, there is nothing You cannot do); **God is He Who Was, He Who Is, and He Who Is to Come** (Father, You are timeless, ageless and forever seated on the Throne, You Reign Eternal).

Now we can begin to see the patterns and priorities of the petitions in Paul's prayer: he wants the believers to grow in their understanding of God and other spiritual truths. We see this in the use of the word "*know*" in verse 17, where he prays that the believers may receive the Spirit of wisdom and revelation so **that they may know God better.**

Theological author and commentator Kent Hughes points out some useful information about the word "*know*" as it is used in the context of the text:³

³ Set Apart: Calling a Worldly Church to a Godly Life (ISBN 1-58134491-0); Kent Hughes: Wheaton. Illinois

The Greek word *gnosis* is most commonly used to mean **personal knowing**. However, here the word is intensified by Paul's use of the preposition **epi**. He is asking for an **epi-gnosis**—a “genuine, deep, full knowledge”, a “complete and thorough knowledge”⁴

Paul wants these believers to have a deep and thorough knowledge of God. When we are first saved, we come to know God. As Christ says in his high priestly prayer to the Father, *“Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”* (John 17:3). In speaking to the false professors in Matthew 7:23, he says, *“I never knew you.”* To be saved is to know God.

Paul wasn't praying for these believers to know God, for they all did. He was praying for a deep, experiential knowledge of God that would continue until they reached heaven. In speaking about Christ's coming and the eternal state, Paul says...

I Corinthians 13:12

“Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”

⁴Bruce Manning Metzger, United Bible Societies, A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, Second Edition a Companion Volume to the United Bible Societies' Greek New Testament (4th Rev. Ed.) (London; New York: United Bible Societies, 1994).

In the eternal state, we will have an intimate knowledge of God which is currently unattainable for us. However, this should be our goal here on earth. Paul says this...

Philippians 3:10

“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”

After leaving everything for Christ, Paul said that his continual endeavor for the rest of his life was to know God, and it should be ours as well. In Latin, there is a phrase “*summum bonum*” which means, “*the greatest good out of which all good flows.*” For the NT Church apostles and believers, the greatest good was knowing God, and from this knowledge everything good flowed—peace, love, joy, service, justice, and mercy. This Biblical template is our practical practice; this too must be our continual pursuit in life.

As we seek to fully understand the apostolic call to prayer, we return to Paul’s prayer in Ephesians 1:17 to gain several insights into knowing God better.

One - Apostolic Believers can know God better by praying for knowledge of Him.

Paul prays for this church to come to a deeper knowledge of God. He prayed because that was one of the ways it would happen. We must pray

for it as well. We must pray this for ourselves and others. We must ask God to make himself known. This is exactly what Moses did. He prayed to God, “*Show me your glory.*” (Exodus 33:18). And God did.

We must pray this way as well. We must pray that he will reveal Himself through His Word, in worship, in service, and in our daily life. This must be our continual prayer as we go throughout the day: *Lord, help me and others to know you more.* Those who faithfully pray prayers such as that will grow in both intimacy with God and knowledge of God.

Two - Apostolic Believers can know God better by trusting in the ministry of the Holy Spirit.

Paul prays for the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in Ephesians 1:17. There is some controversy over what he means by the word “Spirit.” Is he referring to the Holy Spirit, the human spirit, or something else? The ESV, NASB, and NIV translators interpret it as the Holy Spirit.

This is because it is impossible to know God or have revelation about him apart from the Holy Spirit. In John 16:13, the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of truth, meaning that the Holy Spirit leads us into the truth about God.

I Corinthians 2:14 says this,

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

Apparently, apart from the Holy Spirit, we cannot understand anything about God. He is the one who reveals truth to us.

Now, with that said, since Paul is writing to believers, he is not praying that they receive the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 1:13-14, he says that believers are sealed by the Holy Spirit and that the Holy Spirit is a deposit in them, guaranteeing their inheritance. How can he then pray that they have the Spirit?

Paul is clearly referring to the Holy Spirit's ministry. He prays that the Holy Spirit would give these believers revelation about God through the Word of God, creation, events, and the witness of other believers. And he also prays for wisdom to apply this knowledge. Christ says something similar to his disciples...

Luke 11:11-13

Which of you fathers, if your son asks for a fish, will give him a snake instead? Or if he asks for an egg, will give him a scorpion? If you then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!”

Again, in speaking to believers, he is not telling them to pray for the Holy Spirit but rather for the Spirit's ministry. He encourages them to ask and trust that God will give it to them. God wants to give believers every good gift that comes from the Holy Spirit.

Three - We come to know who God is by having the right desire, determination, and disposition towards Him.

However, other commentators think Paul is not referring to the Holy Spirit but to a right determination or disposition. John MacArthur says this:

But like our English word *spirit*, *pneuma* sometimes was used of a disposition, influence, or attitude—as in “He is in high spirits today.” Jesus used the word in that sense in the first beatitude: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit*” (Matthew 5:3). He was not referring to the Holy Spirit or to the human spirit but to the spirit, or attitude, of humility.⁵

The reason people have different views on the word “spirit” is because both are true. We need the Holy Spirit to know God, but we also need the right **desire - determination - disposition**.

A person with a disposition of wisdom and revelation is a person who desires to grow in the wisdom and knowledge of God. He hungers for God. Without a hunger to know God, we won't ever get to truly know him

⁵ MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (1986). *Ephesians* (p. 44). Chicago: Moody Press.

deeply. Many Christians are simply content with their spiritual lives and their knowledge of God. They don't have an inner disposition pushing them to pursue God and to know his voice and Word more. This type of disposition will never know God intimately.

Jeremiah 29:13 says, *"You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart."* We must have a heart that draws near God to find him. Matthew 5:6 says, *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled."*

If we are really hungry to know God more, then He will reveal Himself to us. Do you hunger and thirst for His Word? Do you hunger and thirst for his presence? Listen to the prayer in Psalm 42:1-2: *"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?"*

Is this your desire, determination, and disposition—starving, lost, and unfulfilled apart from the knowledge of Him? This is the desire we must have. This is the determination and disposition we must ask God for—for ourselves and for others.

If we are going to know God, we must labor constantly in prayer, as Paul did. We must pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal God, and we must also pray that God will give us the right desire, determination, and disposition to receive and know Him more.

7.12.26

The Apostolic Call [Continued]

The Call to Prayer - To Equip - To Send

V. Apostolic Prayer Focuses on Knowing the Hope of God's Purpose for His People

Ephesians 1:18

...I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you.

Paul continues to pray for these Ephesian believers to know the hope to which God called them. Hope is very important because it both propels and guides our lives forward in faith. If a person hopes to be a doctor, he focuses on the sciences and studies diligently. Hope drives the direction or heart of his or her life. *If you want to know where someone's heart is, first find out what it is they hope for most.*

If Christians don't have a righteous and divinely placed hope, they will live for this world and this world only - temporal. From this misplaced hope Often they often find themselves disenfranchised, discouraged, and depressed. This is why Paul prays that these believers' hearts be enlightened so they will know the hope to which God called them.

When he says “heart,” he is using a figurative expression for the mind, will, and emotions. Unlike the present-day use of “heart,” it is not primarily emotional. He wants their inner man to be completely enlightened to the hope of their calling.

Scripture typically refers to two types of calls. There is the **general call** of the gospel, a call which goes to all people. Romans 10:13 says, *“Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved”* (KJV). Everybody is offered the gospel—this is the **general call**. Theologians call the second one **the effectual call**—the call that is effective and results in a person’s salvation. Look at how Paul uses this word in Romans.

Romans 8:29-30

For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.

In talking about those God foreknew and predestined to be like Christ, Paul says that God called them, justified them, and glorified them. In this passage, he refers to the **effectual call**—the call that leads to salvation. When God effectually called us, it wasn’t just about salvation—it was for so much more. It spans God’s work before creation, in us now, and throughout eternity.

This call motivated Paul, and it should motivate us as well. Listen to how he says this to the Philippian church.

Philippians 3:13-14

Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

He pressed forward to win the prize for which God “called” him heavenward. Paul put his hope in the call, and it determined his life.

The very reason so many Christians live such earthly lives is that they have a very low understanding of their call and how God wants to use them.

1. The hope of God’s calling includes righteous works on earth.

Ephesians 2:10

“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

God saved us to serve him - in serving Him we best serve ourselves.

Jeremiah 1:5

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

God called Jeremiah to be a prophet before he was born. Each one of us has a call to serve God and glorify him on earth. We are his workmanship - His masterpiece. This means the trials and difficulties we encounter are not random, meaningless, or without purpose. They are like the work of a craftsman chipping away at a rock—creating a "one-of-kind" work that brings glory to Himself.

We need to hear this, especially as the enemy constantly lies to us and tries to tell us we are purposeless and evolutionary accidents. No, God has a specific calling—with specific works—for each individual.

2. The hope of God's calling includes Christ's coming and our resurrected bodies.

I John 3:2-3 ESV

Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

John says that those who truly hope in this reality purify themselves. The fact that Christ is coming, that we will be resurrected, and that we will be like him when we see him is a motivation to live holy and righteous lives. Those who have no hope in Christ's second coming and resurrection live secular, earthly lives. Yes, we must pray for our hearts to be enlightened to this so we can live the pure lives God called us to.

3. The hope of his calling includes the restoration of creation at our resurrection.

Romans 8:19-21 ESV

For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope 21 that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God.

When Adam sinned, God cursed the ground. Creation is connected to humanity. In fact, even when humanity lives in sin, creation still reacts. In *Leviticus 18:28*, God commands Israel not to practice sexual immorality, homosexuality, bestiality, and the offering of their children to Molech lest the land vomit them up. The land would react to sin, as it did at the fall.

However, when God restores humanity to righteousness, when the sons of God are resurrected, all creation will be restored as well. This is a tremendous hope. Even though Christians are persecuted and mocked for their beliefs and the way they live, they are the salt of the earth. They are tremendously valuable to all of creation. One day, creation will be set free into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We must continually hope in this, and this hope must drive us.

4. The hope of his calling includes ruling and serving with Christ in the kingdom.

Remember the famous Corinthian church? Paul challenged and corrected their chaos and divisiveness with this...

1 Corinthians 6:1-4:

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!

In essence, Paul is saying, “Why are you hiring the world to judge your disputes? Don’t you know that one day you will judge angels? So, how much more should you judge the temporary things of this life? If you really have this hope, it should change how you interact with one another. After all, one day you will rule and judge with Christ!” Romans 8:17 says we are “co-heirs” with Christ. Whatever belongs to Christ He shares with us.

If this hope were a true reality, we could eliminate the distraction of being so consumed with the temporary kingdoms of this world. Why live for what’s temporary when the eternal is surpassingly better? Why live to rule on this earth, when we are called to rule in the new heaven and the new

earth? Christ says, “Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

What is your hope in? Is your hope earthly or heavenly? In the same way people with an earthly hope are motivated and driven by it, the hope of our calling in Christ should motivate us. Let us pray for the eyes of our heart to be enlightened and understand the hope of our calling in Christ. Let us pray to be driven by eternal hope.

7.19.26

The Apostolic Call to Prayer [Continued]

VI. Apostolic Prayer Focuses on Knowing God's Great Power in the Saints

Ephesians 1:16-21 JB2000 ABIPE

I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.⁶

Finally, Paul wants us to comprehend God's great power towards us who believe. It can actually be translated "in us"⁷ In fact, in verse 19, he uses "four different Greek synonyms to articulate dynamic purpose and the

⁶ cf. Jubilee Bible 2000, Aramaic Bible in Plain English)

greatness of that power”. The commentary of Kent Hughes’ is insightful. He says:

With the Greek synonyms inserted, the power progression of verse 19 reads like this:

“... and his incomparably great power [*dunamis*] for us who believe. That power [*kratos*] is like the working [*energia*] of his mighty strength [*ischus*].”

Paul delivered these "power" synonyms in a progression to best articulate and build momentum towards reaching to the highest power possible. ALL of that power is in Christ Jesus. He exhausted his language describing this power of the resurrection (check out verse. 20). ⁸

Ephesians 1: 19-23 CJV

...when he worked in the Messiah to raise him from the dead and seat him at his right hand in heaven, far above every ruler, authority, power, dominion or any other name that can be named either in the *‘olam hazeh* or in the *‘olam haba*. Also, he has put all things under his feet and made him head over everything for the Messianic Community, which is his body, the full expression of him who fills all creation. ⁹

⁸ Preaching the Word: Ephesians—The Mystery of the Body of Christ
Hughes, R. Kent • Crossway • 1990

⁹ David H. Stern, Complete Jewish Bible: An English Version of the Tanakh (Old Testament) and B’rit Hadashah (New Testament), 1st ed. (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1998)

Paul is trying to help us comprehend how great the power of God working in us is. It is the same power God used to raise Christ from the dead. Believers need this power for many reasons. Why has God given us this power, and why is it necessary for us to access it?

1. This great power is necessary for us to grow in holiness.

II Peter 1:3

His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires.

This great power is available to both help us escape the corruption in the world and also to continually grow into the image and character of God.

2. This great power is necessary for us to minister to others.

Regarding this great power, Paul says:

Colossians 1:29

To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

Philippians 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

Whatever God has called us to do, he has given us the access - resource - tools, otherwise known as THE POWER OF GOD IN CHRIST JESUS. We must KNOW AND LIVE IN THIS TRUTH.

3. This great power is necessary to nurture our salvation.

I Peter 1:5 says, *“who through faith are shielded by God’s power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time.”* God’s power is shielding us until the completion of our salvation—which is when we will look just like Christ. Those who are truly born again will not lose their salvation because God’s power not only sustains, but protects and keeps them. Christ puts believers in his Father’s hand and he places them in his own hand as well. No one will be able to snatch them out of their hands.

John 10:27-29 ESV

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father’s hand.

4. This great power is necessary to complete our salvation, as we will one day be resurrected.

Romans 8:11

“And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.”

The same Spirit and power that raised Christ from the dead will one day raise us from the dead. Wow...

The final aspect of apostolic prayer is interceding for ourselves and others so that we may know God's great power within us. Are you interceding to know and experience God's power? Are you asking God to allow others to know and experience it in their home life, marriage, work, and ministry?

Ephesians 1:20-23 ESV

...that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Paul describes the greatness of this power. God used it to raise Christ from the dead, to seat him in the heavens over the demonic realm, and to

make Christ the head of the church. This incomparably great power is at work in us. In the next study, we will focus on the incomparable greatness of God's power towards us.

Conclusion

Tips for developing an apostolic prayer life using the principles of Ephesians 1:15-20

One - Apostolic prayer comes from a right heart—an informed, compassionate, constant one.

Two - Apostolic prayer focuses on knowing more about who God is.

Three - Apostolic prayer focuses on knowing the hope of God's purpose for His people.

Four - Apostolic prayer focuses on knowing God's great power in the saints.

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The Apostolic Call

The Call to Prayer - To Equip - To Send

7.26.26

Called to Equip (Part 1)

Introduction

The term *disciple* comes from the Greek *mathetes* and means **one who is a learner and follower**; the term *apostle*, of course, comes from the Greek *apostolos* and means **one who is sent**. According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus spent an entire night in prayer and early the next morning called His disciples together and chose twelve from among them, giving them the specific title “apostles.” They were disciples (learners and followers); they had been taught and equipped by Jesus Himself as they followed, and now He had called and commissioned twelve of them as apostles.

The Gospels of Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-19, and Luke 6:12-16 describe this call and commission of Jesus of disciples to apostles.

Luke 6:12-16 ESV

“In these days He [Jesus] went out to the mountain to pray, and all night He continued in prayer to God. And when day came, He called

His disciples and chose from them twelve, whom He named apostles: Simon, whom He named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

This designation by Jesus marked their calling and commissioning for a unique foundational role in the early church. In Matthew 28, biblical Christian ministry to the Church can be defined within the action plan of the Great Commission given to believers and witnesses by Jesus the Messiah just before He ascended to the heavens. The central call and command of that commission was for the newly formed Church and its leaders to make disciples through means of equipping believers with all that Jesus had taught them - the message and mission of the Kingdom of God and His righteousness. This is the apostolic call to equip.

Matthew 28:19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.”

Shortly after the first call and command of Jesus to equip (make disciples) was given at His ascension, the apostles and other disciples and believers gathered as instructed in the Upper Room at Pentecost. Immediately after the events and outpouring at Pentecost, the disciples began actionable implementation of this in-person, life-changing call and command as

recorded in Luke's Gospel with the Acts of the Apostles (Acts 2:42-47). This was the apostles fulfilling what Christ had commissioned.

Acts 2:42-47

“And they devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. And all who believed were together and had all things in common. And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.”

The practical biblical process and priorities of Christian ministry can be defined in the apostle Paul's words of instruction to believers in Ephesus (modern-day Turkey). This is the apostolic ministry of the Church.

Ephesians 4:7-15 ESV

“But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift. Therefore it says, “When He ascended on high He led a host of captives, and He gave gifts to men.” (In saying, “He ascended,” what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower regions, the earth? He who descended is the One who also

ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) And He gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into Him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

The apostolic model for the call of ministry to equip the Church can be defined by the acts of the early church. To clearly understand the apostolic call of the Church to equip, we are going to look at two biblical examples. The first comes to us from Acts 2:42-47, where the writer Luke chronicles for us the very model that the Church of Jesus must mirror - intentional and actionable. The second will come from the dynamic and influential churches of Ephesus (Ephesians 4:7-15). Teaching the apostles' doctrine, engaging in fellowship, commemorating the breaking of bread, praying together, caring for one another, worshiping God, and actively evangelizing the community. This template continues to be God's intended purpose and the basis of biblical and balanced equipping for apostolic ministry today. It remains the biblical model for the ministry of the present-day apostolic Church. For example, The Reunion Church founded its identity and

mission in the biblical purposes of Acts 2:42-47. This template is more than ancient inspiration and historical landmark; it is more than a missional statement of purpose. It is the transforming Word of God given to those called by His name. It is a shaping and forging of identity and significance found in the purposes and will of God in Christ Jesus.

We love God; we teach His truth; we care for one another in fellowship, communion, and prayer.

Loving God - Serving People - Building Families of Faith