

LG | Leader

[Ephesians 1:3-6]

WARM-UP (10 mins)

It is likely that everyone present had a very busy day, maybe even a trying day. Let's take a moment to still our minds and go to the Lord in prayer.

- In your personal devotion with the Lord, what has the Lord revealed to you through His word this past week? If not, what is keeping you from the Lord?
- When you reflect back on Sunday's sermon, what impacted you the most? Anything that stirred your affection towards the Lord?

ILLUMINATE (40 mins)

Open your Bibles to the primary text.

1. Let's put our brains together and recall what we have learned about Paul. Who is he? How does Paul describe himself/his past? Where is he from? Why was he in Ephesus? How long did he stay in Ephesus?

Paul is Saul from Tarsus. Paul describes his "old self" in 1 Timothy 1:12-15; a blasphemer, persecutor, insolent opponent. He met Jesus on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) and his life was radically changed. He was traveling to Ephesus on his 3rd missionary journey to make the most impact for the Gospel (it was a robust port city, 3rd largest city in the world at the time). He stayed in Ephesus 3 years (his longest stay in any city).

2. How would you describe verse 3 to someone else? What does it mean that Christ has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places?

Upon one's salvation (faith in Jesus), they are sealed by the Holy Spirit and guaranteed an inheritance or spiritual blessing at God's appointed time (upon our death or Jesus' return) (vv. 13-14).

3. Was God aimless in his pursuit of us or did he always have a plan? What was the plan? Was there ever a plan B?

God always had a plan to rescue and reconcile fallen humanity back to Himself. His means of reconciliation was to come down from heaven and take the form of a man (Jesus Christ). Upon Jesus' death, the way was made for us to be redeemed by God. In Christ, we are adopted as sons

and daughters, to the praise of his glorious grace. According to God's word, Jesus Christ was always the plan...there was never a plan B.

4. Many of you may be familiar with some of the heavy theological terms presented by Paul in this text (i.e. chose, predestined or election). In short, predestination describes God's foreknowledge and sovereignty over all things past, present and future, to include our very own salvation. This idea has been debated for centuries and certainly won't be solved tonight, but how many of you are familiar with this understanding? If familiar, how were these ideas first presented to you?

[Allow group to express their understanding]. There are often difficult ideas presented in the Bible, many that might make you say, "how can that be?!" However, in those moments it is absolutely essential that we not draw any immediate conclusions, but rather be patient and continue studying God's word, investigating each passage that presents challenges. In the end, you will find peace in your understanding of who God is and the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth.

5. What is God's ultimate desire for the "purpose of his will"? What is the purpose of election and salvation and essentially everything God does?

Everything God does is for his own glory. It is His glory that sustains us, therefore we should be very concerned about His glory. God understands that he is the best things for us, so he too purposes all things for His glory and our ultimate joy. This concept is mysterious, but very much evidenced in the Bible (example: verse 14).

6. How can we find hope in the will of God?

God desires for us to be satisfied in Him as expressed in our previous question. That means God's will is for us, not against us. And nothing can thwart God's love towards us... therefore, we have hope.

PRAY

Use this time to pray specifically. Pray for the needs of others; locally and abroad.