

PRAY THAT YOU MAY KNOW

- A. Introduction: We are talking about how to develop strong, effective faith through knowing some things about the kingdom.
1. The phrase “kingdom of God” is used several ways in scripture. It sometimes refers to a place called heaven where those who know Christ go when they die. The kingdom sometimes refers to the visible kingdom Jesus will establish on this earth at His Second coming.
 - a. We are talking about another aspect of the kingdom of God -- the kingdom within. Luke 17:20,21
 1. The word kingdom means reign. The kingdom of God is the reign of God. God wants to reign in us and through us.
 2. God made men in such a way that He can indwell us and then express or demonstrate Himself in and through us. God wants to reign in us and through us.
 - b. Jesus came to earth the first time and went to the Cross to pay for our sin so it could be removed, opening the way for God to come into us to reign in and through us.
 1. Once our sin was removed God could bring us into His kingdom -- take us out from under the reign or dominion of sin, Satan, and death, and bring us into the reign of light and life. Through the new birth we are now citizens of a kingdom where life reigns. Col 1:13; Phil 3:20
 2. Once our sin was removed God could bring the kingdom into us. Through the new birth God Himself comes into us by His life, eternal life.
 2. Jesus came to earth to die for our sins, but the three and a half years of His public earth ministry before He went to the Cross served a number of significant purposes -- one of which was to prepare men to accept and receive what He was going to do for us through His death, burial, and resurrection.
 - a. When Jesus began His earth ministry His first public words were: Repent, “Let your hearts be turned from sin” (Basic), for “the Reign of God is near” (Moffatt). Matt 4:17
 - b. Not only did Jesus preach the coming kingdom or reign of God, He demonstrated the reign of God by healing the sick and casting out devils. Matt 4:23,24--Gospel of the Reign. (Moffatt)
 - c. When Jesus sent His twelve disciples out to preach He authorized them to heal the sick and cast out devils and sent them out to proclaim His message that the “Reign of Heaven is near”. (Moffatt)--Matt 10:1,7,8
 1. He told them to demonstrate the reign of God by healing the sick, casting out devils, and raising the dead. The proof that the reign of God was near was the healing of men’s bodies.
 2. Luke 10:9--Heal those in the town who are ill, and tell them, ‘The Reign of God is nearly on you.’ (Moffatt)
 3. The kingdom or reign of God in us and through us is supposed to produce visible, tangible results. In this lesson we want to continue our discussion of how that happens.
- B. The apostle Paul was also commissioned by Jesus to preach the kingdom or the reign of God. Acts 28:23,31
1. Jesus personally appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus -- the first of a number of such appearances -- and personally taught Paul the gospel which he preached. Acts 9:1-9; Acts 26:16; Gal 1:11,12; etc.
 - a. Paul received great revelation from Jesus. He was given the privilege of revealing mysteries or aspects of the plans and purposes of God which had not yet been revealed to men.
 - b. All of these mysteries are various aspects and deeper revelations of the gospel of the kingdom or the reign of God. Rom 16:25; I Cor 15:51; Eph 1:9; 3:3; Col 1:27; etc. (another lesson)
 2. In Acts 19 Paul went to the city of Ephesus, preached the gospel to them, and establishing a church there. Paul stayed in Ephesus for a total of three years, teaching them daily for at least two of those years. Acts 19:8-10; 20:31

- a. Everything Paul taught, he taught so that they would have a part in the kingdom -- heaven when they die, the millennial kingdom Jesus will set up when He comes again, and the reign of God through His people -- now in this life.
 - b. He desired that men and women (sons of God) would demonstrate outwardly what has happened on the inside -- God reigning in us (our hearts, minds, and bodies), God reigning through us destroying the works of the devil in the lives around us. (A whole lesson for another night.)
 - c. Several years later, while in prison in Rome, Paul wrote an epistle to the church at Ephesus. The things Paul wrote would have been said in the context of what Paul had already spent three years teaching the Ephesians.
3. In the epistle to the Ephesians Paul said he regularly prayed for them, telling them what he prayed for them. We can presume two important points about his prayers for them. Eph 1:16-20
- a. Most of his prayer is that they would know some things. From what Paul prayed we find out what he considered critical for them to know if they were going to walk in the power of the kingdom.
 - b. He wasn't praying to be religious. These are Holy Spirit inspired prayers which were meant to produce definite results. By looking at these prayers we can get insight for our discussion.
- C. Paul began his prayer by praying that God would give them wisdom and revelation and that He would enlighten the eyes of their understanding. In order for the information Paul had shared with the Ephesians to have maximum impact on the people they had to see some things by revelation from God.
- 1. They had become citizens of an invisible kingdom of full power and provision. But, it is an invisible, immaterial, or spiritual kingdom.
 - a. Spiritual does not mean not real. It means invisible. It means the kingdom of God is beyond the perceptive abilities of our five physical sense.
 - 1. God meets all of our need -- spiritual and physical -- by giving us the invisible, spiritual provisions of the kingdom. The spiritual can produce tangible results in our lives. Eph 1:3
 - 2. The blessings and provision of the kingdom are accessed by faith. The kind of faith that receives the tangible, visible provisions of the kingdom understands that invisible "things" are as real as "visible" things and believes what God says about them without any physical evidence despite what it sees -- and does not waver.
 - b. Paul knew the unseen was real. Paul saw Jesus numerous times (Acts 18:9,10; 22:18,21; 23:11). He was taken up to the third heaven (II Cor 12:2-4). When he talked about being absent from the body and present with the Lord he knew what he was talking about (II Cor 5:8). He knew the family of God in heaven and earth was real (Eph 3:15). He saw angels (Acts 27:23).
 - c. When he said, "We walk by faith, not sight" (II Cor 5:7), he knew what he was talking about.
 - 2. Faith begins with knowledge of God -- knowing who He is and what He has done, is doing, and will do for us (II Pet 1:2-4) so Paul prayed that his converts would have increased knowledge of God.
 - a. Eph 1:17,18--[For I always pray] the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of Glory, that He may grant you a spirit of wisdom and revelation -- of insight into mysteries and secrets -- in the [deep and intimate] knowledge of Him, By having the eyes of your heart flooded with light so that you can know and understand ... (Amp)
 - b. Paul had already preached Christ to them, preached the kingdom to them, but he prayed that they would have revelation on and deeper understanding of the words he had taught them.
 - 1. Paul prays that they would have wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of God and have the eyes of their understanding opened in three specific areas.
 - 2. He prayed that they would know the hope of His calling, the riches of His inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power to and in us who believe. Eph 1:18-20
 - c. Paul's prayer deals with specific things that make us weak in faith: We believe God won't help us because of our sin and we don't know understand how God works even if He did decide to help us.

- D. If you are going to walk in the kind of faith that accesses the invisible power and provision of the kingdom in a way that produces tangible results you must know the hope of His calling (His plan for you), the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints (what He has given us through Christ), and the exceeding greatness of His power (how He carries out His plan).
1. Paul prays that Christians would know the hope of God's calling. That is a reference to God's plan for man, God's plan for each of us. It is a reference to the "big picture". What is the "big picture"?
 - a. Eph 1:4,5--Long ago, even before he made the world, God chose us to be his very own through what Christ would do for us; he decided then to make us holy in his eyes, without a single fault -- we who stand before him covered in his love. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us into his own family by sending Jesus to die for us. And he did this because he wanted to! (Living Bible). Remember, to adopt means to place as adult sons.
 - b. In Rom 8:29,30 Paul wrote that God has called us into His plan for us, a plan conceived in eternity past -- that He would make us sons like Jesus.
 2. Jesus is the pattern for God's family. While Jesus was on earth He showed us what sons of God are supposed to look like -- how they live, how they act, how they relate to and express their Father.
 - a. Jesus is God become a man without ceasing to be God. While on earth he did not live as God, He lived as a man dependent on the Father.
 1. When Jesus took on flesh He was given eternal life, the life of the Father, in His human spirit (John 5:26). Jesus, as a man, lived by the life of the Father in Him (John 6:57).
 2. The Father was able to express or show Himself through Jesus because Jesus spoke the words of the Father and did the works of the Father by the power of the Father in Him. John 14:9,10
 - b. That life, the life that Jesus lived by (eternal life, the life of the Father) comes into us when we are born again, when the kingdom comes into us.
 1. Jesus said in John 14:20--At that time [after the resurrection] you will know that I am in union with my Father, and you are in union with Me and I in union with you. (Williams)
 2. The new birth begins a process that, through the effect of eternal life in us, will ultimately make us like Jesus in every part of our being.
 3. To walk in strong faith you must first understand the hope of His calling -- so that you may know what is the hope which His call to you inspires (Weymouth). Inspires you to what?
 - a. We struggle with: Will God help me? Why would He help someone like me? But, the very nature of the plan of God, the hope to which we are called, shows us that He will help us.
 1. In order to carry out His plan God had to deal with our sin Himself through His sacrifice on the Cross so that He could justify or acquit us by removing our sin so He could indwell us, so He could unite Himself with us, so He could come into us to reign.
 2. The lengths to which God went to obtain His family shows clearly that He is for you. He did not withhold His Son from you and will withhold nothing from you now. Rom 8:31,32
 - b. There's more to life than just this life. No matter what you are looking at or dealing with, it's temporary and subject to change by the power of God.
 1. No one, including Paul, is in heaven now crying about the hardships they faced in this life. Having an eternal perspective, knowing the hope to which you are called, helps lighten the load of this life and helps you look past what you see with your physical eyes. II Cor 4:17
 2. The most important issue of life is not where you work, who you marry, or what your ministry is supposed to be. The most important goal of our life is conformity to the image of Christ.
 3. Paul himself pressed toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ, that purpose for which God had laid hold of him -- conformity to the image of Christ. Phil 3:12-14
 4. Paul prayed that Christians would know the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints.
 - a. One of the word pictures God uses to help us "see" the unseen is that of heirs with an inheritance. Because we are in the kingdom and the kingdom is in us we are now heirs of God who have an inheritance. Eph 1:11; Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:6,7; Col 1:12; etc.

1. Both words -- heir and inheritance -- convey present tense realities, something we have now. Through using the word picture of heirs who have an inheritance God is conveying to us the idea that there are some things we are and have because we are sons of God.
2. One reason our faith is weak is that we are continually asking God to give us what He has already given. It isn't a case of getting Him to give. It is a case of learning to walk in the light of what we already have and access the provision of the kingdom.
- b. Rom 8:17--We are joint heirs (joint possessors) with Jesus who is the pattern for the family.
 1. Our inheritance includes everything that we have in Christ -- through our union with Christ.
 2. Our inheritance is everything Jesus, as a man, had when He lived on this earth as a man dependent on the life of the Father in Him -- access to the Father, protection, provision, authority and power over the works of the devil.
 3. Our inheritance is made up of invisible or spiritual realities which can produce physical, tangible changes in us and in our lives -- through faith.
- c. When Paul uses the word inheritance in his writings it has a double meaning in several places. It includes the idea that we have an inheritance in God and that He has an inheritance in us. The basic Greek word for both words means a lot, a share, or a portion -- a possession.
 1. Eph 1:11--In Him we also were made [God's] heritage (portion) and we obtained an inheritance... (Amp); I say 'in the Christ', by our union with whom we also became God's own possession...(20th Cent).
 2. Through the Cross and the new birth we have become God's own possession, purchased with His blood. We are a purchased people. We have great value to God. I Pet 2:9; 1:19; I Cor 6:20; Acts 20:28
5. Lastly, Paul prayed that Christians would know the exceeding greatness of God's power for and in us who believe. Eph 1:19--And [so that you can know and understand] what is the immeasurable and unlimited and surpassing greatness of His power in and for us who believe as demonstrated in the working of His mighty strength...(Amp).
 - a. Even if you understand the hope to which you are called and even if you know you have an inheritance, if you do not understand how God works to bring tangible results in your life you will be weak in faith. God works according to the power in us.
 - b. God does not send down help or strength or peace or joy or healing to us from heaven. He has already sent it by giving us His life, His Spirit, by uniting Himself to us.
 1. God works in us, according to the power in us. He does not work from the outside in, He works from the inside out. Eph 1:19; 3:16,20; Phil 2:13; Heb 13:21; etc.
 2. That power is resurrection power. It is the power, the life, which triumphed over death in all its forms in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Eph 1:20
- E. Conclusion: If Paul was led to pray these prayers for people whom he had personally instructed for three years, how much more do we need to pray these prayers for ourselves. Pray that God will give you revelation of His word and enlighten the eyes of your understanding of His word so that you can learn to demonstrate the reign of God in your life!