



## The Nourishing Vocation Project

### Engaging the Living Word

*Ephesians 1:15-23*

#### What is this particular text?

- Part of a letter
- Prayer
- Theological discourse that includes
  - Faith
  - Saints
  - Spirit
  - Power of God in Christ vs. all other powers
  - Jesus – Head of the Church

#### How does the text function within the scriptural story?

- General letter for the whole church

#### How can this text function in the church today?

- Addresses the relationship between politics and religion/faith
- Identifies the limited nature of any government authority, relative to Christ: Christ is above all
- Wrestles with valid political authority and authority of God
- Reminder that the nation is not God
- There is a distinction between God and empire/country: the empire/country is not God, nor is it God's equal

#### What does the text do to you? How do you react to the text? What feelings does this text engender in you?

- Typical of Pauline texts that have lengthy, interwoven themes, it is somewhat overwhelming
- Inspiring
- Confusing
- Comforting: God is God, and we are not (nor are the powers that are beneath God)
- Raises questions, i.e. what does “spirit of wisdom and revelation mean?”
- “Spirit of wisdom and revelation” – brings to mind the “laying on of hands prayer” from the baptismal liturgy

#### What do you have to say to the text?

- A good reminder of God's authority
- Re-focuses us on the source of our hope
- I wonder how those who first received this message heard it
- Amen!

#### What do you see through this text from the story itself?

- Prayer
- Promise and Certainty
  - Christ is both our hope and our certainty

- Reminder of God and God's power and authority
- Jesus is the Head of the Body
- Both a personal a communal message

**What do you see from within your church/community/world? (2022)**

- Challenging times challenge hope
- Appeals to a false sense of hope/security
- Spiritual practices center our hope in Christ
- Crises of our current time
  - Ideologically divided society
  - Christian nationalism

**What do you see within yourself?**

- Hope, like faith, is a gift
- Hope can be hard when there are both personal and public crises

**What is the context – textual and historical?**

- General letter to the church
- Written to the church at Ephesus – maybe by Paul, maybe “in the spirit of Paul”
- Does not address specific problems or concerns
- This text follows the greeting and blessing and precedes teaching about oneness in Christ and Paul's ministry

**What questions does this text raise for you?**

- “For us who believe” – what do we do with this kind of exclusivism?
- What does “glorious inheritance” mean for the living of this life?
- What do the references to “power” mean?
- How does this message for the whole church apply to specific congregations today?
- How do we think about Jesus as the “Head of the Body” today?

**What words/themes seem of particular import?**

- Faith
- Remember
- Pray
- So that ...
- Eyes of your heart enlightened
- Hope
- Power
- Head

**What is the Gospel / transforming Good News within this text?**

- God is God, and we are not
- Our hope is in Christ
- We have an inheritance
- God's power is manifest in Christ
- All things are under Christ

**What is the as-over-againstness of this text?**

- Hope can be elusive



- Political and other powers can shake our assurance in the power of God
- Hope has to have some connection to the living of this life
- There are a lot of things that tempt us with illegitimate power and false hope

**Who does this text say that Jesus is, or if not Jesus, then who does this text say that God is? What does this text say about God?**

- Lord
- Filled with the power of God
- One raised from the dead
- Seated at God's right hand
- Above all
- Head of the Church

**What have others said about this text?**

- [“This is a rich text, packed with theological nuggets.”](#) Mark Tranvik, Professor of Reformation History and Theology, Luther Seminary
- [“Along with the gift of revelation,](#) Paul prays for the gift of spiritual insight. He asks that his readers be illuminated by God, that God's dealings and intentions be understood in the areas of hope, the inheritance of the saints and of the workings of God's power.” Bryan Findlayson
- [“God's hope](#) is the great survival strategy of this age.” Paul Bellan-Boyer

**What will I teach or proclaim?**

- Our hope is in Christ
- No powers of this world can overpower Christ
- God is who God claims to be
- God's hope is for this life and the next
- Christ-centered hope changes everything
- God gives and sustains a spirit of wisdom and revelation in us and for us
- We are called to be Christ-centered hope for the world
  - Speak Truth to the illegitimate powers of this world

