

All the Prayers

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[0 : 0 0] Well if we could this evening with the Lord's help and the Lord's enabling if we could turn back to that portion of scripture that we read Ephesians chapter 1 as I mentioned we're looking at verses 15 to 23 this evening so the second half of the chapter so Ephesians 1 and if we read again at verse 15 Ephesians 1 at 15 where Paul writes For this reason because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints I do not cease to give thanks for you remembering you in my prayers I do not cease to give thanks for you remembering you in my prayers During the late 19th and early 20th century there was a man by the name of William Randolph Hearst

William Randolph Hearst he was an American multi-millionaire he was a businessman who owned a newspaper publishing company but one hobby that William Randolph Hearst had was collecting expensive pieces of art and he collected so many that he filled his mansion with all these collectible items of art but not only his mansion he also built storehouses which he filled them with all these pieces of art these priceless pieces of art and the story is told that one day William Randolph Hearst he was sitting in his mansion by the fire reading an article about a priceless piece of art and when he saw it he wanted it he desired it so he phoned his agent and he said to his agent that he'd give him all the resources he could in order to find and purchase this priceless piece of art and so his agent he went out he sought to track down this priceless piece of art and a number of months went by and the agent he had travelled the globe he had gone to different countries in the world looking for this priceless piece of art then one day

William Randolph Hearst he got a phone call and he was phoned to say the agent phoned to say that he's on his way round to his mansion to see him and Hearst he was full of enthusiasm as you'd expect full of excitement at the thought of receiving this priceless piece of art that he had been so desperately waiting for and so when his agent arrived William Randolph Hearst he asked with anticipation did you find my priceless piece of art and the agent said it took me a while but yes I did find it and William Randolph Hearst he replied and he said how much was it?

who owned it? where did you find it? and the agent said to him sir you're never going to believe this the priceless piece of art didn't cost you anything because all the time it was in one of your storehouses the priceless piece of art didn't cost you anything because all the time it was in one of your storehouses and you know in many ways that story is a modern parable of what we are often like as Christians because as Christians we can possess priceless treasure which we already do but like William Randolph Hearst we can often forget we can often fail to remember we can fail to remember all that we possess through our relationship through Jesus Christ and the reason William Randolph Hearst didn't remember or even realise that he was in possession of that priceless piece of art was because he never took the time to acknowledge it or even to appreciate what he already possessed and you're in the second half of Ephesians chapter 1

Paul is praying here Paul is praying that the Ephesians would be enabled to enjoy the priceless treasures they already possess in and through Jesus Christ Paul is praying that they would enjoy these priceless treasures and so as we consider Paul's prayer that's what the second half of chapter 1 is I want us to think about Paul's prayer under two simple headings the context of the prayer and also the content of his prayer the context and the content so first of all the context of his prayer the context of his prayer we read there in verse 15 Paul says for this reason because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards 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 a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him and so on now Paul begins this section about prayer and he does so by linking it to the previous section using the phrase we see there in verse 15 the phrase for this reason for this reason and Paul links this

section verses 15 to 23 to the previous section verses 3 to 14 he links it to the previous section because the previous section is all about that priceless treasure the priceless treasure that we are all in possession of in and through

[5 : 45] Jesus Christ Paul has already told us about all the blessings that all believers receive through Jesus Christ and when we were considering the previous section last week we saw that the context to Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesus we saw that it's a wonderful context because it reminds us of all the blessings that we have received now remember we touched last week where we said that it was during Paul's third missionary journey that he planted this church the church in Ephesus it was around the year 54 A.D.

and Ephesus as we said it was an important and influential city it was a city that a great seaport city that had this wonderful trade route as a city but it was also a city that was full of idolatry full of immorality but when Paul planted this church and when he preached the gospel in Ephesus hearts were changed and lives were transformed by the grace of God and when Paul wrote this letter which he wrote probably about 10 years after planting the church the church was still very much in its infancy and so Paul didn't write this letter to deal with divisions or false teaching or counterfeit Christians like he did with many of the other letters Paul wrote this letter just to encourage to exhort these Ephesians to keep doing what they're doing to keep plowing away in their furrow and as we saw Paul encouraged and exhorted the Ephesians to keep plowing away in their furrow because Paul knew that when things are going well there's always that temptation to forget the Lord and to lose focus upon the Lord when things are going well there's always that temptation to drift and that's why the first thing

Paul writes about to all the believers at Ephesus he writes about all the blessings that they have received through faith in Jesus Christ and as we saw there last week verses 3 to 14 of chapter 1 it's one long sentence 203 words in Greek 244 words in English and in that long sentence Paul describes and he defines all the blessings that all believers receive in and through Jesus Christ he says we are blessed with everything blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places and you know I always come back to that word blessed I love the word as we said it literally means to kneel where your head is bowed your hand is outstretched you're receiving from the hand of the king what you do not deserve he is blessing you and in that long sentence

Paul describes all these blessings that we are receiving from the gracious hand of the king he says that we receive our election and our predestination our adoption our justification our sanctification our redemption our forgiveness our pardon our perseverance as saints our glorification and even our eternal inheritance and Paul tells us it's all of grace and Paul will expand on that as he goes into chapter 2 that it's all of grace it's all of grace and it has all been graciously and gloriously given and gifted to us from the hand of the king more than that he says all these gracious and glorious gifts and graces they've been given to us with a guarantee they're all guaranteed this guarantee that they're all ours both tonight and for all eternity and that guarantee as Paul says it's the seal of the Holy Spirit and so when we come to this section verses 15 to 23 which it's actually another long sentence in fact when you read

Ephesians chapter 1 in Greek fascinating to see that there are only actually three sentences in this one chapter there are only three sentences in chapter 1 of Paul's letter to the Ephesians the introduction verses 1 and 2 that's one sentence verses 3 to 14 that's another sentence and then verses 15 to 23 that's Paul's last sentence three sentences in one chapter and what Paul prays for in this last sentence verses 15 to 23 what he prays is that unlike William Randolph Hurst who didn't take the time to acknowledge and appreciate the priceless possessions he already owned Paul prays that the Ephesians will be enabled to enjoy all these priceless treasures that they already possess in and through Jesus Christ Paul prays that all the believers will be enabled to enjoy all the blessings all these blessings which have been graciously and gloriously gifted to them and not only gifted to them guaranteed to them as those who are in Christ

[11 : 10] Jesus and notice what Paul says there verse 15 for this reason because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love towards all the saints I do not cease to give thanks for you remembering you in my prayers you know Paul prays for the church in Ephesus and he prays for the church in Ephesus not because there was a crisis in the church because as we saw there wasn't and he doesn't pray for the church in Ephesus because there's a catastrophe in the world Paul prays for the church in Ephesus simply because that's something he always did Paul

continually prayed for the church in Ephesus so we see here that Paul prays for the church in Ephesus because that was his practice. He continually prayed for the church in Ephesus. I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

You know, we're often good at praying when there's a crisis. When there's a crisis maybe in our congregation or in our community or there's a catastrophe in different parts of the world. But Paul is showing us there in verse 16 that that's not the only time we should pray. And we know that. That's not the only time we should pray because we should be continually praying. That's what he's saying. I do not cease. We should be continually praying for our congregation, continually praying for our community, continually praying for the countries of our world. Not just when there's a crisis and not just when there's a catastrophe.

Paul says, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. Paul emphasizes he's continually praying. It's his habit to be praying for this congregation, to be praying for his community and the community of Ephesus. I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you, remembering you in my prayers. And as we know, at the time of writing this letter, as we said, there was no crisis, there was no catastrophe in the church at Ephesus. They were just faithfully plowing away in their furrow. And as Paul says, for that reason, for that reason, just for the fact that they were faithfully plowing away in their furrow, Paul continually prayed for them. That they wouldn't forget the Lord and that they wouldn't lose focus upon the gospel.

Paul continually prayed for them. And you know, I think that's, even to take it to ourselves, that's what we should be doing, continually praying. And we hear it every week at the praying meeting. It's great to hear it, continually praying for the preaching of God's word, for the Sunday school as they meet, the creche, the youth fellowship, the toddler group, continually praying for those in our community, for those in our homes, those in our families, continually praying that they would come to know the Lord, that they would be encouraged. And even as a congregation, that like Ephesus, as Paul was praying for them, that we wouldn't forget the Lord or lose focus upon the gospel. And so that's the context to Paul's prayer. And then secondly, we see the content, the content of Paul's prayer.

He says, And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power towards 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.

[15:38] Do you know, if we were to be honest with one another, which sometimes I don't think we are, I don't think we're honest enough to talk about the things that we struggle with as Christians.

Because if I was to ask you, where do you struggle most as a Christian? Or what area of your Christian life do you struggle with most?

Would you be honest enough to admit that you struggle with something? Certain temptations, bad language, jealousy, anger, alcohol, relationships, rivalries, whatever it is.

Would you be honest enough to admit, not publicly, but to someone in the congregation, that you struggle with these things? Would you be honest enough to admit that you struggle even to read your Bible?

Or to find time to pray? Or that you struggle to come to church? Would you be honest enough to admit that you struggle as a Christian?

[16:42] You know, I think all of us would say, first and foremost, that we struggle to pray. Stephen even mentioned that in prayer.

I'm sure many of us struggle to read our Bible. We struggle with different temptations. But I think all of us struggle to pray. And if I'm honest with you, which I should be and I want to be, the area I struggle most in as a Christian is prayer.

It's the hardest thing. Because the truth is, and as Stephen was praying himself, we can find time to do anything and everything else apart from pray. And when we do pray, we're so easily distracted. Our attention is diverted. There are so many things to disrupt what's going on and disrupt our prayers. There are so many things that make us busy and our lives are bustling about.

So many things to procrastinate on instead of pray about. Now, I don't know about you, but I certainly don't have the mentality or even the mindset of the great German reformer Martin Luther.

[17:54] You know Martin Luther, when he had a busy day ahead of him, this is what he said, I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours of my day in prayer. Have any of us ever woken up and did that?

My diary is full today. I need to spend three hours in prayer before I begin my day. But you know, what is it about prayer that we struggle with so much? Because, you know, I think it's the greatest plan and the greatest ploy of the devil to make us so busy that we're too busy to pray. And as it's often said, if you're too busy to pray, then you're too busy. If you're too busy to pray, then you're too busy. And yet, prayer, as we all know, is a gift from God. Because it's through prayer that we receive access to the throne of grace and the attention of the God of heaven. It's through prayer that we receive access to the throne of heaven and attention of the God of heaven.

And, you know, prayer was crucial always to the reformers. You study the reformers, you look at their lives, and prayer was crucial to the preaching and the pastoring of the reformers.

[19:10] Because they all wrote about the importance and the influence of prayer. In fact, the French reformer, John Calvin, he wrote six reasons why we should pray.

Just six. Six reasons why we should pray. And I'll read them to you. Number one, to depend upon our heavenly Father. Number two, to purify the desires of our heart.

Number three, to be content with our providence. Number four, to appreciate his faithfulness. Number five, to enjoy the gifts he provides.

And number six, to trust him for our daily bread. And of course, there are many reasons why we should pray. But Calvin sets before us six reasons. Six reasons why we should pray.

But even with six reasons to pray, more often than not, we feel that our prayers are going nowhere and doing nothing. And yet the promise of prayer, when we study the Bible and think about prayer, the promise of prayer is that we are to proceed in prayer.

[20:20] We're to persist in prayer. We're to persevere in prayer. We're even to plead in prayer. We're to pray for one another. We're to pray for one another.

And you know, I'm really thankful for those praying for one another prayer notes. I think it's great to be reminded of who to pray for and what to pray for.

Because we're so prone to forgetting. And the thing is, we should be praying for one another as congregations. Not just focusing inwardly, but always looking outward.

Focusing up and praying for other congregations. Praying for one another. We should be clinging to the promise of prayer by proceeding, persisting, persevering, and pleading for one another in prayer.

Because, as you know, our Bible emphasizes the one another. Paul emphasizes the one another. Paul says time and time again in his letters, he says, And as you know, the one one another that Paul emphasizes again and again is love one another.

[21:47] Love one another And you know I believe we can do a lot of our one anothering By praying for one another We can do a lot of our one anothering By praying for one another And that's what Paul is emphasizing here Because when Paul wrote this letter He was in prison He was in prison for preaching the gospel He couldn't come to Ephesus He couldn't send money to Ephesus All Paul could do for the church in Ephesus Was pray for them But we shouldn't say that's all Paul could do That's more than enough for Paul to do He was praying for the church Paul was praying for the church in Ephesus He was praying for all of them But you know something Paul did Which we are poor at doing Paul told the church in Ephesus

That he was praying for them And you know that would have been the greatest encouragement To the church at Ephesus To know that their pastor Their former pastor Was praying for them Because I think it's the greatest encouragement To anyone To be told that you're praying for them And you're praying for them In whatever circumstances and situation That they're going through But I don't think we do it often enough When was the last time you told somebody That you're praying for them I don't think we encourage one another By praying for them And telling them that we're praying for them That's how we should encourage one another We pray for them first and foremost But also tell them That we're praying for them That they're on your mind They're on your heart Because that's what the first thing Paul does in this letter With the Ephesians After defining and describing all the blessings

That all these believers receive in and through Jesus Christ After explaining who they are in Christ Paul goes on to say Now remember I'm praying for you Remember I'm praying for you But Paul he not only tells the Ephesians That he's praying for them He also tells them what he's praying for them Because Paul says I'm praying I'm praying Verse 17 That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ The Father of glory May give you a spirit of wisdom And of revelation In the knowledge of him What

Paul is praying In verse 17 is Paul is praying That the Ephesians would know Jesus better Paul is praying That the Ephesians would know Jesus better And you know That's the greatest prayer Anyone can pray For a Christian That they would know Jesus better Of course it's good to pray About someone's health

Someone's happiness Someone's home life It's good to pray When someone is sick Or suffering Or sorrowing But as Paul reminds us The greatest prayer Anyone can pray For a Christian Is that in the midst Of all the providences That they go through in life That through it They get to know Jesus better Do you know What a great prayer To pray that a Christian In the darkest And most difficult of providences That they would get To know Jesus better That they would experience And even enjoy A deeper relationship With Jesus Christ You know Paul is praying That the Ephesians Would get to know Jesus Better But what I love About Paul's prayers Is that they're Very specific They're not glossy And general Like our prayers Often tend to be Paul's prayers They're specific They're straight To the point He says exactly He explains to them Exactly what he's praying about Because when Paul prays That the church in Ephesus Would experience And enjoy A deeper relationship With Jesus By getting to know him Better He also prays How he believes That should happen He says in verse 18 He wants him To get to know Jesus better How?

[26 : 12] 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 Towards us who believe According to the working Of his great might Paul prays That the Ephesians Would know Jesus better By having the eyes Of their hearts Enlightened By having the eyes Of their hearts Enlightened Now as you know When you become a Christian When you're converted When you're Effectually called The Holy Spirit Is at work in your heart Transforming Your life And our catechism Says that one of the ways In which the Holy Spirit Works in our heart Is that he not only Convinces us Of our sin and misery And he renews Our will But he also Enlightens our mind In the knowledge Of Christ He enlightens our mind In the knowledge of Christ But Paul's prayer here

For the Ephesians Is that they would have The eyes of their hearts Enlightened Not that they would be Converted to Christ But that they would Continue with Christ He knows that they've Already been converted He saw them coming to faith When he was there He saw that the Holy Spirit Has enlightened their minds In the knowledge of Christ But Paul now As a pastor Who's in prison Praying for This congregation He's praying That they will continue With Christ Day by day That the eyes Of their hearts Would be enlightened More and more And that their relationship With Jesus Would grow deeper And deeper So that the Ephesians Would know As he says there And you He talks about Three things And he uses the word What If you notice it there Having the eyes Of your hearts Enlightened So 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 Towards us Who believe Paul prays That the Ephesians Would grow deeper And deeper In their relationship With Jesus So that they will know Their hope in Christ So that they will know The riches Of their glorious Inheritance In Christ And that they will know The immeasurable Greatness Of Christ's power In their life Paul says That's what I'm Praying about for you That's what I'm Praying for you You know You look at it And you think Well what a prayer What a prayer That someone Would pray that For me It's not the kind Of prayer You would want Your pastor To pray for you Or your elders Or your deacons Or even your Christian friends To pray with you And for you about That you would know Jesus better

That you would know Your hope in Christ That you would know The glorious inheritance That you have In Christ That you would know The immeasurable Greatness Of Christ's power That is at work In your heart And in your life What a great prayer Not only To pray that For somebody But to tell them That that's what You're praying For them But there's more Because As Paul prays And we're going to Come to a conclusion In a minute Paul prays This He says As he goes on Towards the end Of the chapter He says This Jesus This Jesus Is the risen Ruling and reigning King With all authority In heaven And on earth And it's all According to the Working of his Great might So Paul knows That what he's Praying He's handing it Over to Jesus Everything he's Praying He's giving it To the Lord And he says Well Lord It's up to you It's in your hands

Paul is in prison Praying that they Would know What is the hope To which he has Called them What is the riches Of their glorious Inheritance What is the Immeasurable greatness Of his power Towards them Who believe And he says Well it's all Up to Jesus Because he is the one As it says

Verse 20 He worked in Christ When he raised him From the dead 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 Gave him As head Over all things To the church Which is his body The fullness of him Who fills all In all Paul says This is what I'm Praying for you This is what I'm Asking the Lord Who is sovereign Superior And supreme To do In your life And in your congregation And you step back From it And you think

[31 : 15] Well what a prayer What a prayer For a congregation To be told about Because unlike William Randolph Hearst Who didn't take the time To acknowledge And appreciate All his priceless Possessions Paul prays And he tells The Ephesians That he's praying For them And he's praying That they will be Enabled to enjoy All these priceless Treasures All these Spiritual Blessings That they will Be enabled To enjoy them Through their faith In Jesus Christ But you know Is that not the kind Of prayer You want people To pray for you As a Christian That you will Get to know Jesus better That you'll grow Deeper and deeper In your relationship With you That you're not Not just that they'll Pray about You'll be happy And healthy But that you'll Be enabled To enjoy The priceless Treasures That you already Possess By getting

To know Jesus Better That you'll Get to know Jesus Better What a wonderful Prayer That Paul prayed For the church Well may the Lord Bless these thoughts To us And let us pray O Lord our gracious God We We confess Lord that we need To be taught Even how to pray For Lord often We come with Words of our lips But our hearts Are far from thee And Lord we pray That we would Truly pray From the depths Of our heart Confessing Lord That thou art one Who knows our heart And who knows Our thoughts We thank thee O Lord For the privilege Of prayer That we are able To bring every prayer Every petition To the throne Of grace And to know That the God Of heaven Is attentive To our voice And Lord help us We pray To pray for one another To bear one another's Burdens To love one another As Christ Hath loved us And gave himself For us And Lord So we pray That even as We are reminded there That as we pray For one another We would tell One another That we are praying For them And that even In doing so We would pray That they would Know the hope That they have In Christ That they would Know the inheritance That they have In Christ That they would Know the greatness Of the power Of God That is at work In them A power that Raised Jesus From the dead A power That is beyond Our asking And even Beyond our thinking Lord bless us Together Together then We pray Remember those Who are Unable to be With us This evening Those confined To their homes Those Lord In our congregation Who are unwell And Lord We pray That each And every One of us As thy people That we would Grow in our Relationship with thee That we would Learn to know Jesus better That we would Grow deeper And deeper In our

Relationship with him The one who loved us And gave himself For us Cleanse us And we pray Go before us Take away our Iniquity Receive us Graciously For Jesus' Sake Amen We're going to sing In conclusion The words of Psalm 63 Psalm 63 We're singing From the beginning Down to the Verse marked Five Psalm 63 Page 295 Psalm 63 The psalmist Must have been Like Martin Luther Because he got up Early To seek the Lord in prayer He wanted to Know Jesus Better That's what we Have in Psalm 63 Someone who Wants to know Jesus better Lord thee my God I'll early Seek My soul Doth thirst For thee My flesh Longs in a Dry parched Land Wherein no Waters be That I Thy power May behold And brightness Of thy face As I have Seen thee Here to For Within thy Holy place Since better Is thy love Than life My lips The praise Shall give I in thy Name Will lift My hands And bless Thee While I Live Down to the Verse Marked 5 Of Psalm 63 To God's Praise On The Lord comes in a dry parched land, where in low waters be.

[36 : 21] That I thy power may behold, and brightness of thy face.

As I have seen thee here turn forth within thy holy face.
It's better this thy love than life, my lips thee praise shall give.
I in thy name will lift my hands and bless thee while I live.
In us with sorrow and with heart, my soul shall fill and be.

[37 : 42] Then shall my mouth with joyful lips sing praises unto thee.

Amen. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all, now and forevermore. Amen.