

# Christians pray! They can't help themselves!

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     So there's two parts to the reading today. The first is the whole of Ephesians chapter 1. And then we'll jump to Ephesians 3 verses 14 to 21.

Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus and are faithful in Christ Jesus, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

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, even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him.

In love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved.

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 him, things in heaven and things on earth.

[ 1 : 2 6 ]     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.

In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

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.

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.

And then we're jumping forward to, I'll double check that I get this right, chapter 3, 14 to 21. 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.

[ 4 : 00 ] Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Well, I first want to thank Dave and the elders for allowing me this great privilege of preaching this morning.

As I was musing upon the subject and musing upon things, I realised that the Apostle Paul was banished to the Isle of Patmos for preaching the Gospel when he was 90.

And here I am past his age and thankfully I'm not banished yet. So let's pray. Father, we're grateful indeed for the privilege not only for me to preach the word but for us to hear your word read so clearly.

And we realise that your word will accomplish its purposes today despite the weaknesses of the preacher. But Father, we pray now that you would give us ears to hear and hearts to believe and to realise that we have a great God and Saviour, Jesus Christ our Lord.

[ 5 : 30 ] Amen. Amen. According to Miss Congeniality, Sandra Bullock and all the rest of the contestants in that beauty contest, we should all be aiming for nobody's watched the movie.

That's tough. That's in the first just congeniality. They all end up with world peace.

They want people to pray for world peace. In the movie, Robin Hood, while Kevin Costas sword fighting the villains trying to rescue a little boy up a tree, his Muslim mate is behind the wall with his prayer mat down, praying.

People pray because God has put eternity in their hearts.

We see that in Ecclesiastes 3.11. My parents were heavily involved in a Christian church and would be regarded as very religious.

[ 6 : 55 ] Religious people pray. As a child, I was taught to pray. As I knelt next to my bed each night, I would kneel down and pray, gentle Jesus, meek and mild, look upon a little child, pity my simplicity, suffer thee to come to me.

I learnt the Lord's prayer. I might have been 10 or 11 when there was a murder in a house two doors from where I lived at Cook's Hill.

And after that, before I jumped into bed, I would check the wardrobe, see that no one was in it, check under the bed, lock the window, jump into bed and start to pray, Our Father, deliver me from evil for yours is the power.

Amen. Amen. World War II was raging. My eldest brother, Jack, was in PNG fighting Japanese. We were all greatly affected by this war.

Jack's wife and two little girls came from Tamas to stay in the bedroom that my brother and I occupied. I had to get out in a little veranda and I don't know where my brother ended up.

[ 8 : 22 ] Everything was rationed. Nerves were on edge. My father said to me one day, I would be happy to drop an atom bomb on the Japanese if it would end the war.

But in the midst of misery, there were the greedy, sadistic, warmongers who profited from the misery of others.

I learnt the Apostles' Creed and to pray about that. The war ended and people tried to get their lives together, many of them without their loved ones.

But we soon became insensitive to the horrors of war. Our minds and loves were diverted to monopoly. Winning is everything.

Sending everyone broke was a great joy. Or we might be distracted by the radio series like the never-ending Blue Hills or Dad and Dave.

[ 9 : 32 ] I think when I was caught in June, Blue Hills was up to 5,000-something-odd episodes. Movies like The Wizard of Oz singing in the rain.

Feel-good things took our mind off problems. And here we are after 80 years of relief from major wars and the fact that we can kill in our computer games.

Others wonder if there are any more people left in mid-summer. But we're happy to hear Arnie say I'm back.

We like to watch the equaliser, the sentinel, Jack Reacher and the fact that the Avengers and Marvel characters are around to protect the world. Compared to many other countries, we live in luxury.

Even with eternity in our hearts, we get caught up in a fantasy world. world. But I'm sure if you watch the news or listen to the radio, those living in Israel or Gaza, Ukraine and other war-torn areas, the millions starving around the world and others persecuted, they don't see this world, this world that we live as a fantasy.

[ 11 : 09 ] leaders throughout the world often call their people to pray in times of tragedy. They'll say pray for him or her or it, whoever or whatever you look to to answer your prayers.

Religious people pray because deep down they know there's more to life than this world. whether they know it or not, they can't escape the fact that eternity is in their hearts.

They know right from wrong. And you might be thinking, what a mickmash of things I've presented. But isn't that the real world that we live in?

So the first thing we wanted to know was religious people pray but the second thing is Christians pray.

They can't help themselves. I was nearly 25 when June and I married. Taking her to hospital to have our baby was a real trial when you didn't have a car and the hospital was several kilometres away.

[ 12 : 30 ] You get your mate next door to drive the car and when you got to the maternity ward you would hand June's suitcase to the nurse and she will say well you go home and we'll let you know what happens.

And you baby cries and you young parents witness witness their first breath and their first cry and you were happy.

After that you count the fingers and toes I know and all those sort of things. But it was that first breath the child was alive and it was making its presence felt.

Babies cry. cry. They can't help themselves. And there are different types of cries. I've been here with some of you young parents and we're in the middle of a conversation and there'll be a cry amongst a dozen other cries and you say I think that's my baby I'll have to go.

You know their cries. You know they cry for all sorts of reasons. Get attention. Pick me up. Cry because they're hungry. Cry before they're frightened.

[ 13 : 52 ] Cry because something's hurting them but you know their cries. You know they're alive and they're well. But as it is with a new baby so it is with a newborn Christian.

When nearly 29 God brought me to my knees in the lounge room. He convicted me of my sin against his holy holiness and showed me that his son Jesus Christ died on the cross for me to take away my sins.

On the third day he rose again to make me right with himself. Having breathed into me new life I prayed Lord save me.

That was 64 years ago this month. Consider the apostle Paul who was Saul of Tarsus on the road to Damascus and the Lord meets him and he's knocked off his horse as it were and here he is and the Lord speaks to him why are you persecuting me Saul and he says Lord who are you?

What would you have me to do? He's blind for a few days and then he goes to him. You can see this in the Damascus named Ananias and to him the Lord said to him in a vision Ananias and he said here I am Lord.

[ 15 : 28 ] So the Lord said to him arise and go to the street called Straight and inquire of the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus for behold he is praying.

Paul prayed because he was a newborn babe in Christ.

Very religious person now a Christian and he can't himself help himself but pray. In fact if you read his epistles you find he's constantly saying that and I think Emma brought out something when she was playing the guitar with the kids.

he says in 1 Thessalonians 5.17 pray without ceasing. In chapter 5 verse 25 brethren pray for us. In Ephesians 6.18 when he's describing the Christian armour and talking about the helmet of salvation, the sword, the spirit, etc.

And then he said praying always with all prayer and supplication in the spirit. Brethren Christians pray.

[ 16 : 37 ] they just can't help themselves. The elders suggested that I speak on Ephesians 3 the passage that Liz just read for us, verses 14 through 21 and especially thinking about the verses that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith and that you being rooted and grounded in love may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that we may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Verse 14 says, for this reason I bow my knees, says the apostle. He was praying this for the people. What a great prayer for you and I to pray for the brethren.

how can we pray them if we don't know them? So a good exercise for you in the next week or so is to learn every name of the people that come here week by week and pray for them that they may know this great thing what is the length and breadth and depth and height to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge that they may be filled with all the fullness of God.

What a great prayer. prayer to pray for the church. We can pray for the elders too can't we?

We can pray especially for the preachers and this is what Paul wanted when you read in 1 Corinthians 2 1 to 5 and he says I brethren when I came to you I did not come in excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the mystery of God for I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

[ 18 : 39 ] I was with you in weakness and in fear and in much trembling and my speech and my preaching were not persuasive words of human wisdom but in the demonstration of the spirit and power that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

and anybody that preaches regularly knows that after you've done all your preparation and all your study you condense things down to what you think is manageable and you put this black typing on white paper that's all it is and we need we need the power of God and that's what Paul's praying to the Corinthians he said I want to come to you in a demonstration of power and the spirit we need to pray for our preachers that the Holy Spirit will so fill them and we'll be so moved I was telling the people at St Andrews Presbyterian the last week or two there was a liberal Presbyterian church we never heard the gospel as you hear every week here but one man in 22 years impressed me I was an unbeliever but this was a

Welshman and Gareth is not here this morning for him to cheer but this Welshman all I remember was sitting in the choir and looking at him with a little bit of dribble coming out of the side of his mouth but he was leaning over the pulpit which is quite high at St Andrews running his fingers through his ears and he really wanted people to believe the word that he was bringing he was earnest and he was sincere we want to see that with our preachers we want to know that they've spent that time in prayer themselves praying for each one of you we want to know that they have a love for you in such a way that their heart's desire is that you might be saved so Christians can't help themselves from praying and we pray for all sorts of things don't we they're the minor things that seem so big at the time where's my glasses where'd I leave the keys and like me yesterday where'd I park the car and the kids did I leave my towel and sandals at the beach or in the change room mum will kill me if I've lost them again what's that person name

I'm talking to I just finished my assignment very happy with it and then I wiped it where did it go and then of course there are the bigger things aren't there the bigger things that cause us real concern the Christian child is frightened in the dark and cries out for mum and dad to come and the parents come and they hold their hand and they take turns in praying over her and singing to her the 23rd Psalm until she falls asleep there's a teenager standing at the bus stop after school and here the seniors come and cover him with spittle he's humiliated and he goes home and he and of course he's crying and he tells his parents what happened but he has to pray for grace to recover and to forgive the perpetrators what about the children watching their parents going through that divorce and wondering what will happen to them now and if they too when they marry will this be their problem what about the young people who feel they've missed the boat and will never be married and have a family of their own on their knees praying earnestly that they will understand and accept Romans 8 28 all things work together for good to those who love the Lord for those who are called according to his purpose or the young married young woman whose young mother has just had a miscarriage has just lost a baby she has carried for nine months needing the God of all comfort who embrace her what about the father who's going through a mental torment so tormented that he can't go home to his wife and children every day after work he has to find a solitary place he has to get down on his knees and crawl around that building and pray that he might his mind might be clear that he might be fit enough to go home to his wife and children what about the two elders with the church disintegrating around them and they fall on their knees and plead

Lord close us or use us and many I know have been feeling that we have been in the wilderness wilderness and we need that assurance of the strength of the rescuer when we're in this deep trouble I love that parting song of Solomon 8 5 where it says who is this coming up from the wilderness leaning upon her beloved and brethren if you've ever been in that position you know what I'm talking about you know what it's like to feel that you're in the wilderness and you look to Christ and you plead with Christ and you find yourself leaning on his arm as he brings you out of the wilderness but I believe there is an all important spiritual lesson why Christians can't help themselves and they must pray and I think if you look at

[ 25 : 23 ] Ephesians 1 that Liz read to us you'll see it I believe that once God opened your heart to assimilate the immensity of what he's telling us here you will rejoice with joy unspeakable I remember reading it once when I couldn't finish reading I was so overcome by it you'll realise in verse 3 that union with Christ as Henry Mayen says union with Christ has made you the believer an inhabitant of two worlds spiritual spiritually you have already been raised and seated in heavenly places in Christ as we see in chapter 2 verse 6 as a Christian you'll know indeed what the triune God has had to do willingly to make you one of his own to make you a member of his forever family because you're learning to understand who your heavenly father is and that you have access to him through his son as verse 6 says in that chapter 1 of

Ephesians he raised us up and made us acceptable in the beloved and you have been blessed with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places as it says in verse 3 all these blessings every spiritual blessing I don't think I can comprehend that I don't think we will ever get to the length and depth and breadth and height of these blessings and this love of Christ towards his people they're yours they're mine if you're a Christian today and as you lay hold of them and the enormity of what God has done for you who as it says in chapter 2 verse 1 who are dead in trespass and sin and verse 3 children are wroth even as others you'll rejoice that in time and space he butted into your life and made you one of his own for all eternity but the amazing thing above that

I think is when you read these threefold work of the triune God in this chapter the work of the father verses 3 through 6 he's blessed us with every spiritual blessing in heavenly places in Christ just as he chose us in him when before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before him in love having predestined us to the adoption of sons by Jesus Christ to himself according to his good pleasure and then we have this work of the son the seven in him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace which he made to abound towards us in all wisdom and prudence having made known to us the misery of his will according to his good pleasure which he purposed in himself that in the dispensation of the fullness of time he might gather together in one all things in

Christ both which are in heaven and which are on earth in him in him we have obtained an inheritance being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things in the work of the Holy Spirit in verses 13 and 14 in him you also trusted after you heard the word of truth the gospel of your salvation in him also having believed you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is the guarantee of an inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession and then if you notice I left out those three parts verse six to the praise of the glory of his grace verse 12 to the praise of his glory and verse 14 to the praise of his glory no wonder after writing that inspired by

God to show him these great things he falls on his knees and verse 15 Paul says therefore I also after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints do not cease to give thanks for you making mention of you in my prayers that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ the Father of glory would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation and the knowledge of him the eyes of your understanding be enlightened that you may know what is the greatness of his power to us who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him in heavenly places Paul wants us to know inspired by God God wants us to know this power that it took to make you and I a

[ 31 : 10 ] Christian if you're a Christian today and the word there the power is this word which is dynamite it's not taking the good bits of you and making you a little bit better there has to be a new creation a new creature and it takes the same power that raised Christ from the dead to make you a Christian and God wants you to know this he wants you to embrace this he wants you to give him all the glory and the praise he doesn't want anyone to say well well you know I took the first step and God did the rest God will not share his glory with another he wants you to embrace this total work the only reason why we are here today and many of us professing to know

Christ because he first loved us we would never have loved him first he loved us first he moved towards us and even from all eternity oh I love that saved from all eternity every Christian that ever will be saved or has been saved will be in glory forever with the Lord praising him and glorifying him and giving him all the honour that's due to him without any presence of sin oh that's something to look forward to isn't it I don't know about you but for myself I am sometimes overcome with amazement why me oh if you knew me like the

Lord knew me you would say that too why don't the joy in my heart is so full to over flying that my eternal salvation is in the Lord's hands I pray I praise God oh the whole hymn has it right praise my soul the king of heaven to thy feet my tribute bring ransomed healed restored forgiven who like me your praise should sing and as I put on my bowls and as I my favourite psalm that I've told you many times psalm 116 and I can say in all sincerity I love the Lord because he heard my cry and my supplications because he inclined his ear to me therefore

I'll call upon him all the days of my life is that you this morning are you a Christian one who can't help themselves but pray so let's pray now father we are most grateful indeed that you've given us this spirit of prayer oh Lord we pray in all sorts of circumstances we're praying always we can't help ourselves Lord because we realise what a great God and saviour you are and what it cost your son to die on the cross to bear our sins and our iniquities in his body on that tree to rise again that we might be right with you we thank you dear Lord Jesus that you live and reign forever and that you intercede for us as our great advocate and father we just give you thanks for today in

Jesus name Amen