

Praying Big Prayers

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[0 : 0 0] And welcome again to our Summer Bible Studies. It is the final evening. A warm welcome again to Peter for just giving of your time over the last four Wednesdays to come and preach to us. Well, if you've been following along, and if I get this right, I wasn't here for the first one. I believe that over the last three weeks, we looked at in the first week the topic of prayer, but how the act of prayer and prayer itself is shaped by the wonderful reality that God is Trinity. Then in the second week, we looked at the Lord's Prayer that Jesus taught us. And again, we saw how that prayer is answered in the coming of the Lord Jesus, his death and resurrection, answered and fulfilled because of the Lord Jesus. And then last week, we looked at how God's words given to us in the Bible could shape and be used by us for our own prayers. And so it almost culminates in tonight's topic of praying big prayers. Father, the psalmist says, Direct my footsteps according to your word, and let no sin rule over me.

[1 : 1 3] And so we pray this now for ourselves as we hear your word. Sanctify us, Lord, with your word. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

Colossians 1, verse 1 to 14, and King Lee will come and read it. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God and Timothy, our brother.

To God's holy people in Colossae, the faithful brothers and sisters in Christ, grace and peace to you from God our Father. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you, because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people.

The faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you have already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you.

In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and grown throughout the whole world, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

[2 : 2 6] You learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is a faithful minister of Christ on our behalf, and who also told us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.

For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, forgiveness of sins.

This is the word of the Lord. If you are building a house, the first thing you need is foundations. If you are building a skyscraper, the first thing you need is foundations. If you want to pray big prayers, you need big foundations.

[4 : 2 4] And the big foundations for big prayers are a big God and big praises. Years ago, J.B. Phillips wrote a book entitled Your God is Too Small.

And he wrote the book because he thought that in England at the time, there were lots of Christian people whose God was too small.

Why might your God be too small? The obvious answer is that you don't read the Bible.

Without the Bible, our God will shrink. The more Bible we read, the bigger our view of our big God.

So, foundation, big God, big praises, and then big prayers.

[5 : 44] The Lord has established his throne in heaven. His kingdom rules over all. Sing praises to God.

Sing praises. Sing praises to our King. Sing praises. For God is the King of all the earth. Sing to him a psalm of praise. Praise. And from Jeremiah, a verse we looked at the other night, God says, Do I not fill heaven and earth?

And this Old Testament message is reinforced and enriched within the New Testament. There is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.

And the Colossians passage, The Son is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. For in him all things were created, things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities, all things have been created through him and for him.

He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. So, a big God leads to a big Christ.

[7 : 12] A small God leads to a small Christ. Hebrews, The Son is the radiance of God's glory and exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word.

After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the majesty in heaven. But this big God, this great God, this powerful God, is also a compassionate God who is not so big that he cannot notice the smallest sparrow fall to the ground.

Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered.

So don't be afraid, you're worth more than many sparrows. For some people who have a vision of a big God, they think that God is so big that he can't be concerned with the smallest details of the universe, let alone our lives.

But this is the kind of bigness of the God of the Bible who is immense and vast and powerful beyond all others. and yet uses his power to notice the smallest things that happen and the smallest details of our lives.

[8 : 49] And as Jesus said, with God, all things are possible. I was talking to a woman today when she and her husband have just arrived at our church and she told me the story of her conversion.

She was living in London. Her third child had club feet. And she, although brought up in a Christian family, she had never owned a trust in God.

Anyway, it was two days before the operation and in desperation, she called out to God, please heal my daughter.

The next day, she took her daughter to the hospital to meet the surgeon to prepare for the operation and the surgeon said, your daughter has healed herself.

Well, actually, who had done the healing? Some people think it might have been God. I think it was God.

[10 : 05] And Jesus said, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

Big God, a big Christ. For I've come down from heaven not to do my own will, but to do the will of him who sent me. And this is the will of him who sent me, that I should lose none of all those he has given me.

But raise them up at the last day. For my Father's will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him will have eternal life.

And I will raise them up at the last day. A big God, a big Jesus, a big Saviour, a powerful God, a powerful Jesus, a powerful Saviour.

and as we read in Revelation, the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Messiah and he will reign forever and ever.

[11 : 22] So God is big. He shares his greatness with his Son. And God's greatness includes not only sovereign power over all creation, but also merciful and constant care for the smallest and most insignificant elements of his creation.

You see, the tragedy is that some people try to pray big prayers, but only believe in a small God.

God. And if you try to pray big prayers, but you only believe in a small God, then you'll think that it's your own faith which has to bridge the gap between God and the answer to your prayer.

God. If God is the size of a rabbit and you're asking him to heal someone or convert someone or bring millions to faith in Jesus Christ, you'll think, well, I have to believe in this rabbit-sized God with lots and lots and lots of faith to pray this prayer.

But if you believe in a big God, then you don't need much faith at all, do you?

Because the power comes not from the strength of your faith, but from God. God. The more we read the Bible, the more we will know who God is.

[13:15] The more we read the Bible, the more we will meet our big God. The right response to God's self-revelation in the Bible of his bigness or his self-revelation at all includes praising him and thanking him for his greatness.

We often make the mistake of thinking that believing that God is good and great is enough. But the Bible shows us that actually it's not just believing it, it is praising God and thanking him for his greatness, which is needed and appropriate.

So that wonderful verse from Psalm 47, again, sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises to our king, sing praises.

Have you got the message? I'll just say it again in case you missed it. Sing praises to God, sing praises, sing praises to our king, sing praises.

For God is the king of all the earth, what do you do? Sing to him a psalm of praise. But we're not only singing, but we're shouting.

[14:55] Please don't do it tonight. Shout for joy to God all the earth. Sing the glory of his name, make his praise glorious.

Sing to God, sing in praise of his name, extol him who rides on the clouds, rejoice before him. His name is the Lord.

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. That's massive, isn't it? Because it's about the greatness of God and the compassion of God and the right response is to believe it, but not just believe it, but praise God for who he is.

Or again from the Psalms, the Lord has established his throne in heaven, his kingdom rules over all. Praise the Lord, you his angels, you mighty ones who do his bidding, who obey his word.

Praise the Lord, all his heavenly hosts, you his servants who do his will. Praise the Lord, all his works, everywhere in his dominion. Praise the Lord, my soul.

[16:15] I hope you're picking up a recurring theme here. Praise the Lord, praise the Lord, you his servants. Praise the name of the Lord.

Let the name of the Lord be praised both now and forever more. From the rising of the sun to the place where it sets, the name of the Lord is to be praised.

The Lord is exalted over all the nations, his glory above the heavens. Who is like the Lord our God, the one who sits enthroned on high, who stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth.

Isn't that wonderful? God is reigning on high, seated. He's not fighting a battle to keep the place under control. No, he's seated on high, but he stoops down to look on the heavens and the earth.

Again, praise the Lord, praise the Lord from the heavens, praise him from the heights above, praise him all his angels, praise him all his heavenly hosts, praise him sun and moon, praise him all you shining stars, praise him you highest heavens and you waters above the skies, let them praise the name of the Lord, for at his command they were created and he established them forever and ever.

[17:40] He issued a decree that will never pass away. Praise the Lord from the earth, you great sea creatures and all ocean depths, lightning and hail, snow and clouds, stormy winds that do his bidding, you mountains and all hills, fruit trees and all cedars, wild animals and all cattle, small creatures and flying birds, kings of the earth and all nations, you princes and all rulers on earth, young men and women, old men and children, praise the Lord.

And then from Romans 1 we read of the danger of not praising the Lord. God's love.

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people who suppress the truth by their wickedness.

Since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God or gave thanks to him. Or we could say they neither praised him as God nor gave thanks to him.

[19:37] I want you to see how dangerous it is to avoid glorifying God, praising him, or giving thanks to him.

What will be the result of not glorifying God, that is, speaking of his glory, and giving thanks to him?

the result is their thinking became futile, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God, the images made to look like a mortal human being, and birds, and animals, and reptiles. failing to glorify God, speak of his glory, sing of his glory, failure to praise God, and a failure to give thanks to him for being God, is the most dangerous activity in the world. And final verses, verses from this section, Revelation chapter 4, I'd like us to read these words together.

[21 : 25] It's so magnificent, this wonderful vision that John saw. Together, in the centre, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were covered with eyes in front and in back.

The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle.

Each of the four living creatures had six wings, and was covered with eyes all around, even on their wings. Day and night, they never stopped saying, Holy, holy, holy is the Lord, God, tonight, who was and is and is to come.

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honour, and thanks to him who sits on the throne, and who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives forever and ever.

They lay their crowns before the throne and say, You are worthy, our Lord, and our God, to receive glory and honour and power. For you created all things, and by your will they were created and happy in you.

[22 : 53] And I'm sure you'll also have in the mind the great song in praise of the slaughtered lamb in Revelation chapter 5. Well, people often look at Paul's prayers, but let's look at some of Paul's praises.

Paul wrote that praising God, glorifying God was important. Did he do it? Well, here he is in Romans 11, having written of the glory of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He says, Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. How unsearchable his judgments and his paths beyond tracing out.

Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor? Who has ever given to God that God should repay them? Now, listen to these words, for from him and through him and for him are all things, so to him be the glory forever.

God. That's a massively big picture of God. From him, through him and for him are all things.

[24 : 27] No wonder to him be the glory forever. Or another praise of Paul in the last verses of Romans.

Now, to him who is able to establish you, in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past, but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from faith.

To the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ. Or think of Philippians chapter 2.

In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used for his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

[25 : 47] Therefore, God highly exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Or another outburst of praise in 2 Timothy chapter 2. If we died with him, that is with Christ, we will also live with him. If we endure, we will also reign with him.

If we disown him, he will also disown us. If we are faithless, he remains faithful, for he cannot disown himself. So, we read the Bible and meet our big God, and then we praise our big God.

We read the Bible and meet our big God, then we praise our big God, then we can pray big prayers to our big God.

Notice how Paul interweaves praise and thanks with praying big prayers, as we heard in Colossians chapter 1.

[27 : 13] So, in Ephesians, we can say, by the way, if you're reading through Ephesians and you think, well, I can skip this because there's nothing of practical importance here.

I'll wait for the instructions about how we ought to live, then repent. praise be to, well, let's read it together.

Here we go. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world, to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us.

[28 : 35] With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times reached their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things in heaven and in love.

And we'll read the next paragraph together. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan, him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation, when you believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promise to the Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

Stop there. But notice the connection. Because Paul has praised the glory of God in salvation, he then is prompted to pray a big prayer.

And what a big prayer it is. God has for this reason, since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

[30 : 17] I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

Dear friends, I hope that this year you will pray big prayers for yourself and big prayers for others and big prayers for this church and big prayers for the evangelization of this world.

[31 : 45] God. If you know that God is a big God and if you praise God for his greatness, you're more likely to pray big prayers for yourself and for others and for this church and for God's great gospel work throughout the world.

prayer. Or notice that Paul can mix it the other way, another big prayer but followed by praise.

You can start, you can praise God and then pray. You can also hear in Ephesians 3, pray and then praise.

Praise. For this reason I kneel before the Father from whom every family in heaven and earth derives its name.

I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his spirit in your inner being so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.

[32 : 56] And I pray that you being rooted and established in love may have power together with all of God's holy people to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ and to know this love that surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine according to his power that's at work within us. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations

forever and ever.

Amen. Well I must confess if I'd been writing a piece I think I would have worded that phrase a little differently.

I think I would have said that God you're able to do immeasurably more than we ask or imagine according to his power that it's work within us to him be glory in Christ Jesus and possibly the church.

Paul prays big prayers. Paul has big praises doesn't he? because the God who's able to do immeasurably all more than all we ask or imagine can be glorified in our church, in his church, in the church of Jesus Christ.

[34 : 48] Colossians 1 and 2 is thanksgiving and praise, then prayer, then praise. Paul is used to mixing his drinks, praise and prayer.

Paul has not been to Colossae. He's heard about their conversion. Notice that he praises, begins by praising God for their conversion and their faith, but then he's praising God that the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world.

And then he prays that prayer and then he praises the Son of God. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

Please notice, Paul doesn't pray without thanking. We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you.

Because we've heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, the love you have for all saints, for God's people, the faith and love that spring from the hope stored up for you in heaven and about which you've already heard in the true message of the gospel that has come to you.

[36 : 15] He's on a praise and thanksgiving rollercoaster, isn't he? In the same way, the gospel is bearing fruit and growing throughout the whole world, just as it had been doing among you since the day you heard it and truly understood God's grace.

You've learned it from Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who's a faithful minister of Christ on your behalf and also told us of your love in the Spirit.

For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will, through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord, please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father who's qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of life.

Notice the wonderful combination of endurance and patience and joyful thanks. That's the sign of God's great work in believers and in churches.

And then, as we heard earlier, he goes on to praise the Son of God in the rest of chapter 1. Well, I think I should stop giving you examples, but in Philippians 1, we have thanksgiving and praise and then prayer, and in 1 Thessalonians, thanksgiving, praise, and prayer.

[38 : 11] Now, the message is very simple. We read the Bible and meet our big God, then we praise and thank our big God, then we can pray big prayers to our big God.

Why not try using some of Paul's praises, thanksgivings, and prayers when you pray? Let's say it together.

Big God, big praises, big prayers. Again, big God, big praises, big prayers. May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all and evermore.

Amen.