

Prayer and Power

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- [0 : 0 0] As we stand, let us pray. Father in heaven, we thank you and we praise you that in Jesus you have given to us every spiritual blessing.
- And we pray that as we look at Paul's prayer, that our hearts and our minds would be filled with those blessings, that they would go deep into our hearts and our minds, and that you would bring your gracious and good change and rule into our lives through your Holy Spirit.
- In Jesus' name we pray. Amen. Please be seated. Well, today is a day to take heart.
- It is, there's lots of things that do this. Today is Mother's Day for one thing. We're deeply thankful for that great gift that mothers are to us, knowing that there is much goodness that God gives to us through our mothers and has given.
- The prayer that we're going to look at in the bulletin says this well. There's a real sense of us being able to encourage our mothers today as well and allow them to take heart.
- [1 : 1 6] After all, we've put them through. But it's also a day to take heart even more so because today is the day of Pentecost. We celebrate today because the Holy Spirit has been poured out onto his people.
- And in a wonderful way, Galatians 4 tells us that because God has adopted you as sons and daughters, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
- So today we take heart because of this wonderful gift of a healed relationship with the one true living God, where he actually comes to dwell with us. That is the good news that Rico was talking about last week in the mission.
- And we are encouraged by what God did through that as well, making clear to us what the gospel is and bringing others into a saving knowledge of Jesus.
- It's a great gift. We're also encouraged because of the conference that we had two weeks ago, seeing what God is doing in this church by the Holy Spirit providing for us ways that we might be guaranteed the future of gospel ministry at St. John's.
- [2 : 2 9] And then here again in this book of Ephesians, as we get back to this book after a break of a couple of weeks, Paul tells us in the first 14 verses incredible truths that encourage our hearts.
- We see God graciously and powerfully working in us. So I'd ask you to turn to page 180, and we're going to look at page 181 as well.
- If you remember right, in the past few weeks at the beginning of this sermon series, we have seen in verses 1 through 14 God's gracious gift lavished on us of grace.
- You will see in those verses that God has chosen you to be adopted from before the foundation of time, as Mark was talking to the children about. We see there that God has redeemed you.
- He has forgiven you through the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. Thirdly, he's made known to us the mystery of his will, something that was hidden for ages and is now made plain, and that is this plan to unite all things under Jesus Christ.

- [3 : 41] And we're going to talk more about that in this sermon. And he gives us finally his Holy Spirit as a guarantee that we belong to him, that these spiritual blessings are ours, and that they are bringing about his gracious change in us, bringing us to heaven.
- So the first 14 verses begin to flesh out what the blessings are that we have in Jesus Christ, what the riches of his grace are. And these are truths that are life-changing.
- They are actually universe-changing because they reveal to us the glory of God. They reveal to us what God is doing with this world.
- And it brings a lot of joy to Paul, so much joy that he is every English teacher's nightmare. He has given this exuberant sentence that goes on and on and on until the end of verse 14.
- He's excited. It is because he is encouraged, as we should be, by who God is for us. And so this should be the greatest of encouragement to each of us as well.
- [4 : 48] If you remember David talking about what the prayer book has to say about some of the things here in verses 1 through 14, it says, in Article 17, our election in Christ is full of sweet and pleasant and unspeakable comfort for godly people.
- And it goes on to say that it doth fervently kindle their love towards God. That's a marvelous way of putting the fact that there is deep goodness that comes from knowing these blessings.
- And when we allow them to go deep into our minds and our hearts, our love towards God is kindled. And there is this unspeakable comfort or encouragement, which is what it really means, that takes place in our hearts.
- But you know that there is always temptation in our life as we live in this world to forget those blessings. And the cares and concerns in our busy life cloud them.
- And we may wonder, how are those blessings relevant to my life right now? And that might be because there are very difficult things that you are going through. And it seems as though blessings are very few and far between.
- [6 : 02] Or the opposite thing may be happening. You may be pursuing a wonderful and exciting career track or a wonderful, exciting relationship. And there are things in your lives that are more relevant blessings.
- And this would be something that the people of the churches in and around Ephesus were very vulnerable to as well. They lived in a spiritually dark place in the cities around Ephesus. But they also lived in a place very prosperous and beautiful with many, many things that would seem like more relevant blessings.
- And so in our passage today, Paul prays for them personally. And because this is the word of God, Paul is actually praying personally for each of us as well. And what he prays in those short verses is a very powerful prayer, asking God to make his wonderful truths, his blessings, go deep into our minds and into our hearts.
- So that they are much more than just facts about God that are rolling around in our heads that we know are true. But that he's praying that the fullness of these blessings would be in our hearts.
- We would know them in all their goodness and fullness. And actually that we would know God. And it's very interesting. Paul's prayer, I'll just quickly say, has three parts to it, which I think informs our prayers.
- [7 : 26] He starts with thanksgiving. He then continues and he prays for the needs that he sees around him. And then he ends by confessing who God is.
- He ends by reminding himself and the people what the gospel is. The gospel of the Lord Jesus. And so in verse 16, he starts by saying, I do not cease to give thanks for you.

And this isn't saying that all he did all day was give thanks for the people. But it is saying that every time Paul committed himself to prayer, which would have been probably three times a day, which would have been his upbringing, morning, noon, and night for an hour each time, he would have given thanks because what he was seeing in the Ephesians' lives.

Paul knew that their faith was genuine. This is what excites him in verse 15. Their faith is genuine in Jesus. He's heard about it. And he knows it's real because of the genuine love that is to all the saints.

You see that in verse 15. And you see what has happened is that their faith is real and powerful. And it means that there's a genuine love towards all the saints.

[8 : 40] And that means whether they are Gentile or Jew, whether they are slave or free, or whether they are man or woman, there is a genuine love for all people that actually transcends all the barriers, the cultural barriers, the prejudice, and any kind of thing that would separate.

And this is the mark of a spiritually healthy church. It is the way that God's truth transforms people's hearts and their minds. And it's good for us to look out at St. John's.

Are we a spiritually healthy church? We should always be checking on that. Are there any barriers or prejudices between people here at St. John's? Are we striving to love all of the saints here at St. John's?

The saints that Paul prays for. It is a mark of real faith if that is happening. So Paul is very excited. He gives thanks. And second, at the end of verse 16, he prays for them.

And the way he puts it is that I remember you in my prayers. Literally, he says in the original that he is constantly asking God to help them.

[9 : 52] And, you know, there must have been a multitude of needs that he could have chosen to pray for. But what he chooses, first of all, is that the Father of glory, if you see it there, would give a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.

Verse 17. And it's probably a better translation to say the spirit of wisdom and revelation because it is the Holy Spirit who reveals God, the Holy Spirit who makes us to know the will of God, which is wisdom.

It's a great phrase, and it continues in a wonderful way in verse 18, which is very memorable. And I hope you go away remembering this week this line. He says, Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened.

Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened. It's quite a picture. Because he's saying, he is praying that he wants people to know God in a personal way by having the eyes of their hearts enlightened.

The heart was the center and source of physical life. It was the center of the whole inner life with our emotions and our wills and our thinking.

[11 : 00] And Paul is asking God to flood the innermost part of who we are with the knowledge of God. Flood who we are with the light of his truth.

When you hear testimonies, and I love listening to testimonies, often what you hear about people when they go from being somebody who did not know God to somebody who knows God through Jesus, there is a moment where often they will talk about a light being switched on.

About the penny dropping. Whereas there is this time where you realize who God is in all his wonder and goodness. And this is what it's talking about here.

This often happens through reading God's word or hearing it preached. It may have happened in your life when you first believed. And my hope is that it happened for a lot of people last weekend as well.

But God is saying here that not only does this happen when you first come to believe, Paul is praying for Christians who have been followers of Jesus for quite a while. On this Pentecost Sunday, Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit will continually open you the eyes of your hearts to his glorious truth.

[12 : 16] Reveal Jesus to us constantly. We need the Holy Spirit so that we not just know about God, but know him as our heavenly Father.

Know him as the one who chose us. Know him as the one who has made us his children. That is a gift that we are given as we read his word by the Holy Spirit.

Now there are three things that Paul fleshes out that he wants our hearts to see. There are three things he wants our hearts to see. And each one starts with what.

So if you look at verse 18, it says, Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope, what is the hope of which he has called you.

Literally, he is praying that you will know the hope of God's calling because it's his calling. And what he is saying there is that God wants you to know that he has called you from the foundation of the world before that, in Christ.

[13 : 18] And that call is personal. He calls you by name. He knew you, as Mark was talking about, before you were, as you were being knit together in your mother's womb.

And he calls you to become adopted as his children. And that is true hope. It is the hope that only Christ can give because through that you have salvation.

You receive his righteousness. You will receive the resurrection of your body. You will receive eternal life. And in fact, you experience it now. You will know God's glory in all its fullness.

And here in this chapter, it talks a lot about the hope that is before us where Jesus will bring all things. God will bring all things under Jesus' gracious rule. people.

This is the hope that we have, the one that God has called us to to take part in. There's a number of Bible studies that are studying Ephesians right now.

[14 : 20] And in the central focus group that I am part of, we talked about hope one day when we were looking at this passage. And one of the people talked about how he had become a Christian several years ago.

And at the point of becoming a Christian, he realized that the hopes, all of the hope that he had before he was a Christian could not really be called hope. That the hope that he has in Christ Jesus eclipses all of that.

Because all of the hope that happens before Christ is a hope that is confined to this world. It's a hope for success, a hope for security, a hope for happiness in this world.

But God's hope is different. It is centered on the Lord Jesus. It is a true and living hope. We do not see yet, but is before us. And it changes us.

It changes the whole direction and center of our life. In the dark times that we go through, in times of depression, in times of turbulence that we may be facing, no matter how dark the situation, this hope says that God has a bigger plan for us.

[15 : 28] He is doing a work in the world that will end up with Jesus uniting all things under him. And so this is the hope that we are called to.

And secondly, the second what there is the, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints? End of verse 18.

What are the riches of his glorious inheritance? And notice that it is God's inheritance that Paul is talking about. Now this is a passage that is often discussed.

Is it talking about our inheritance or God's inheritance? Well, it seems in the context that it's more likely that it is God's inheritance, that the saints belong to God.

They are his possession. They are actually his riches, which is a wonderful thing to be able to know. Because what it is saying is that you and I are God's inheritance.

[16 : 25] You are God's prized possession. God looks at you in the Lord Jesus Christ and he sees that you are infinitely valuable. He has given us the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

And one day, you will fully see how deeply valuable you are to God, our Father, when you stand in his presence. That is an awesome thought.

It is something that we cannot fully wrap our minds around. But this glorious inheritance, the riches of his inheritance, is referring to us. And Paul prays that we will be able to grasp this.

And I think that this is such a powerful thing for us as we live in this world. Often the world has very different ideas of what value and worth is. There's a lot of pressure on us telling us that we may be worthless.

We may at times tell ourselves this as well. But the truth is, is that God sees us very, very differently. In Jesus, it is revealed to us. Our hearts are open to the fact that we are God's prized possession.

[17 : 32] Thirdly, Paul prays that we might know what, in verse 19, is the immeasurable greatness of his power in us who believe, according to the work of his great might.

Now, you may notice here that Paul is repeating himself. He's piling up these words that describe greatness. It is immeasurable. It's great. It's mighty.

He's struggling to try to tell us how wonderful and deep and great the power of God is. And this is important for us to know because the power that we see in this world is often very daunting.

We put a lot of credence into it. We see often a power that is destructive. And so, on the news, we hear about Myanmar.

We see the destructive power of nature and the way that people's lives are destroyed. We see the destructive power of human nature in Zimbabwe, in Sudan, in some of the incompetence that we see in Myanmar's government as well.

[18 : 41] There's lots of instances where we see power that is destructive. And the power that is good is often hidden or not shown to us. In fact, often power is something that's promised, good power.

And so, you will get politicians and we are flooded in the news now with the election in the United States. There's great promises of change, promises of the goodness that power can do.

But the problem is that we all know the longer we deal with our political systems that the promises that are given cannot be kept. And in fact, they cannot do anything no matter how powerful politicians are.

They can't do anything about death and they can do far too little about evil. And those are the two things that defeat humanity. But God opens us up to his power in these verses.

And he explains what it is, how deep it is. He says, this power in verse 20 which he accomplished in Christ when he, first of all, raised him from the dead and second of all, made him sit 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 in that which is to come.

[20 : 00] And thirdly, he has made him the head over all things for the church which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all. And you see, that's saying that God's power overshadows and defeats the great enemies of evil and death.

Not only that, but God's power is greater than all the powers that are around us, greater than all that is powerful in the world around the church as well.

And amazingly, Paul says, that power is in you who believe. And that's an awesome thought.

God is doing that work of his power in us. And it's hard to fully take that in. This is a time in the life of the Gifford household where we are renovating a bathroom.

And when I looked at that, I was far too flippant when I thought about what the commitment would be when you renovate a bathroom, but it is big. And if you know, if you've experienced it, you know it will always cost more than you thought, it will always take longer than you thought, and it will always take more out of you than you thought.

[21 : 13] But the amazing thing about renovations is it's very exciting when you tear everything out. You can be very destructive for hours on end. And it's amazing how much comes out of those bathrooms.

Things that are now useless. Things that you didn't realize were there. And it's quite a feeling to get rid of all that stuff. And then, it's amazing how much goes into it.

And how much money goes into it as well. But it is something that there's an utter change that takes place. And the thing we found out too is that you cannot use your bathroom for that time when everybody's working on it.

And so we're thankful for a second bathroom, but we're getting sick of it. But the difference here, there is a similarity and a difference because the power that God is doing in us is a work of renovation.

He is taking out that which is old and useless to him, and he's putting into us the things that are of him, that are new, that are in accordance with his plan as well.

[22 : 21] And the difference is that whereas we could not use our bathroom, God uses us at the very beginning of our renovation. He sees us as being valuable to his work.

He sees us as people that he will work through. And he uses us to do his will in the world. That's God's power at work within us.

There is purpose in his power. He's bringing all things, including each of us, under the lordship of the lord Jesus Christ. He's deepening our love for God and for one another.

He is ministering to people through us as well. Belief in Jesus is not just a cherished and private opinion. It's something that brings with it the power of God changing us into the image of Jesus, our lord.

Now, as we're talking about Jesus being lord, I want to mention a very disturbing thing that I saw in the news this week. The youth synod of the Anglican synod in Toronto had a youth creed that they put out.

[23 : 30] And the creed is very disturbing. And what it says about Jesus is this. It says, we believe in Jesus of Nazareth, who is our brother, and who wants not to be idolized, but to be followed.

And this does not bode well for the future of the Anglican Church of Canada, and we need to pray for that church, because what it effectively does is to deny the lordship of Jesus.

But yet, this is what this passage is about. Knowing Jesus and his power is to know what it means to give our lives in service to him, to die to ourselves, and to live to him, to worship and love God by obeying him.

I love what Greg Venable said at the conference two weeks ago. At the youth service on the Friday night, the youth asked him lots of difficult questions, and the last question they asked him was, what is the best thing about being a Christian?

Which is a great question. And he had a two-part answer. He said, the best part is knowing that Jesus will never leave you, and that no matter what happens, and he will take you to heaven.

[24 : 42] And secondly, he said, the best thing is that you are free to do absolutely anything that Jesus wants you to do. And that's what the lordship of Jesus means.

That's what it means to live out the lordship of Jesus. We are freed, we are redeemed to live in this way. And God brings his gracious change to allow that to happen.

And I thought it was just great that at that service we had two people involved in the youth ministry give their testimony of God working in their life, of what it meant for them to serve our lord Jesus, the joy that that brought them, and the transformation that his gospel brings to them and to those around them in that ministry.

Here is the lordship of Jesus bringing about his powerful change, bringing all things under his lordship. And so as we leave this passage, I hope that your hearts are encouraged.

God gives you his spirit so that you can love him and know him as your father, to know his blessings, really allow them to go deep into you.

[25 : 53] And therefore, you have a certain hope of being part of God's plan to bring all things under Jesus' loving rule. You are God's chosen possession, precious in his sight.

And you have God's immense power that raised Jesus from the dead and made him lord. You have that power working in your life. So today on Pentecost, he has filled us that we might know him and allow us to live for him in a world that God is actually bringing under his gracious rule.

Therefore, we are ambitious for God. And this is what our challenge is. Be ambitious for God. Be confident in his great power, not only to change you, but to bring his rule into the world around the church.

And God does that rule for the church. This is what we are to be about. There's no need to fear the future, whatever happens, because God is at work filling the earth with the knowledge of his glory.

glory. May we give God thanks and praise. May our hearts be deeply encouraged by his gracious work in this way that every spiritual blessing on heaven and earth has been given to us in our Lord Jesus Christ.

[27 : 13] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Our Lord, we would turn to you now in prayer. We would always turn to you in prayer, Lord. We would turn to you in this radiant gift in which you confer upon us so many blessings, blessings of a high dignity.

You call us to pray for change in the world, for change in our lives. So, Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer. Lord, we would pray for our world today.

And as we've been reminded, we would especially pray for those who are immediately involved in this catastrophic event in Burma, Miramar.

[28 : 26] Our Lord, give wisdom here. Give effective, practical wisdom to governments and aid agencies as they respond to such a great multitude in such need.

Lord, we would pray for peace in the world. We continue to pray for peace in Palestine and Israel, for peace in Iraq.

We pray, Lord, for peace in Afghanistan, and we would especially pray for Canadian soldiers involved in that conflict. Lord, we remember our Queen and the Royal Family.

We pray for our Prime Minister, for premiers of the provinces, for municipal officials. Lord, we give you deep thanks for the gift of order and peace and good government.

Lord, for these things we pray, as your Church awaits eagerly your return and your eternal reign of peace. Lord, in your mercy.

[29 : 33] Hear our prayer. We pray for the Church of Christ, the Church militant here on earth. We pray today, Lord, for missionaries, for pastors, for teachers, for witnesses everywhere who proclaim that Jesus is Lord.

We thank you, our Lord, and we give you thanks for our Archbishop, Gregory Venables. We give you thanks for Bishop Harvey and for Bishop Harding.

Keep them, Lord, safe in all ways. We pray, Lord, that you would give wisdom to all who lead and give counsel in your Church, that wisdom which is from above, as your Church finds her way in your way for her.

Lord, in your mercy. Hear our prayer. And this day we would pray, especially, of course, for mothers. And we're going to pray for mothers in the prayer found in our service order on page four, if you'll turn there now.

Page four in the service sheet. A prayer for, again, a prayer for mothers. And so we pray together.

[30 : 55] Our Father, you brought us all from our mother's womb. You brought many of us to trust in you, even at our mother's breast. And from birth we were cast upon you.

We thank you for our mothers this day, for their care and patience and love in childhood's earliest days, for the prayers they offered, the counsel they gave, and the example they set.

We bring you our prayers. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen. And continuing in prayer, we would pray today, of course, for the suffering among us.

By name today, we are asked to remember Arlene and Rowena, Fiona and Irwin, Barbara, Janet.

We pray for Margaret and Marguerite. We pray for Michelle and Jim. Lord, we pray for these.

[32 : 02] And we pray for all we know who are close to us and suffer at this time. Lord, for these we pray. Lord, with them we wait.

And we pray for healing. We pray for an increase in hope. We pray for an increase in godly patience. Lord, we do, the church and all of us, we groan with the spirit over a creation which waits for healing, which waits for the redemption of all things.

Come, Holy Ghost, our souls inspire. Holy Spirit, breathe prayer in us always. Lord, hear, Lord, hear these our prayers.

And we offer them in the name and deed which is above all names, the one we worship as God incarnate, even Jesus Christ.

Lord, in your mercy, hear our prayer. according to our left. Lord, here, Jesus Christ, Lord, peace, hope for a heart.

[33 : 18] The church in the morning Newman, Lord, for a love. The church pope In the power of Israel and Heavenly Father They Ospoken