

Eph 1.15-18 The Apostles Pastoral Prayer

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles and turn to the book of Ephesians.

As we continue in our series in the book of Ephesians, a quick introduction and review, the letter to the Ephesians is a pastoral and theological letter.

I've been saying this within introductions and sometimes with repetition and introductions, it can be easy to glaze over and wait for the new stuff to take hold.

But I say this to draw attention to it, because here we really see this drawn out of the text that we're going to look at. So this letter to the Ephesians by the Apostle Paul is a pastoral and theological letter, which is written to saints, to Christians, to strengthen them, to fortify them in unity.

And as such, or to accomplish such, he starts off with what is to believe with the first three chapters, and then the last three chapters is what is to be done. Glorifying in the knowledge of God and his wondrous works produces a longing to serve and obey Christ.

[1 : 27] Today, in the first chapter, we're going to look at verses 15 to 18, and we're going to look at the Apostle's pastoral prayer.

So we'll read the whole chapter, but it's verses 15 to 18 that will be our text for the sermon this morning. Ephesians chapter 1.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints who are in Ephesus, and 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 with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ, just as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love, having predestined us to adoption as sons by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, by which he made us accepted in the beloved.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace, which he made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of times, he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth in him.

[3 : 21] In him also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things, according to the counsel of his will, that we who first trusted in Christ should be to the praise of his glory.

In him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, in whom also having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, to the praise of his glory.

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, may give to you the spirit of wisdom, and revelation, and the knowledge of him, the eyes of your understanding, being enlightened, that you may know what is the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward 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 at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come.

And he put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Lord, I thank you for this text that we have before us this morning. Thank you that we have your word. Thank you that we have your divine revelation and accessible to us in a language that we can read and understand it.

[5 : 36] And as we consider what is in your word, Lord, I pray for the work of your spirit to illuminate your word to us that you would enlighten, that you would enlighten our minds and our hearts, that we would, that we would understand the truth from your word.

I pray that you would lead me, that you would be with me, that you would give me clarity of mind and articulation of words to faithfully articulate truth from your word.

And I pray that you would attend your word with your spirit to accomplish your purposes in building up the church, edifying the saints, equipping them for ministry, convicting the lost, and advancing your kingdom. I pray, Lord, that above all, you would be glorified.

I pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. So what we have in our text is a prayer. A prayer, the Apostles' Pastoral Prayer. It is a prayer of thanksgiving.

And this prayer of thanksgiving follows after a doxology. So notice he works through doxology or a eulogy or a praise of God. And then he comes to this prayer of thanksgiving after his doxology of praise to God.

[6 : 46] And this prayer of thankfulness, it is thankfulness for the work of God in the lives of the saints. Now, I'm sure that if we all were to put our minds together and reflect on conversations we've had with people and create a list, we would probably be able to create a pretty big list in all the times we have heard people present statements or arguments, if you will, along the lines of things like doctrine divides.

Or how many times have you heard people say things like, it's not about theology, it's about relationships. Or how many times have you heard, it's about what we do, not about what we know.

I've even been told that pastors and elders should not be concerned about doctrine when people are hurting. And the way that the word doctrine was used was projected in a way as though the very enunciating of it left a bitter taste in their mouth for even saying the word.

People will even use scripture but misapply scripture, so present scripture but with unbiblical meaning worked into it, misapplying texts such as that the Ephesians have lost their first love, saying here's the Ephesians who are sound in doctrine and they were prudent in discerning against false teachers and against false apostles and look where that led them.

They draw an imaginary line to say that the cause of sound doctrine results in losing their first love which is misapplying that text. Or they'll misapply the text that says knowledge puffs up to assume that knowledge of doctrine, knowledge of God's word is vice.

[8 : 33] However, in our text here, in this divinely inspired apostolic letter, we see Paul's heart for the people of God.

It's not a false dilemma. It's not a false dichotomy of doctrine or love. It's not doctrine versus love as some would try to suppress sound doctrine likely because sound doctrine suppresses their ideology.

But some would try to suppress sound doctrine and thus consequently suppress glorying in the knowledge of God and in his wondrous works. So as we see in our text in this letter, Paul was concerned about doctrine and he was concerned about God's people.

It's not a false dichotomy here. It is a theological and pastoral letter. Theology is not a hindrance to caring for people's souls.

Rather, it is nourishment. So is sound doctrine biblical? In other words, can doctrine be defined?

[9 : 43] Can it be defined as sound according to scripture? Can scripture be used to define what sound doctrine is? Can doctrine be definitively unsound? Can doctrine be resolutely understood?

A few verses in Titus 2.1, it says, Speak the things which are proper for sound doctrine. So here we have, there is something that is sound doctrine.

Not only can sound doctrine be understood, but it can be understood so that it can speak things which are proper for sound doctrine.

Or Romans 16.17, Note those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you learn and avoid them. So here we're told to note and avoid action to be taken those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine.

So doctrine can be defined, doctrine can be understood, and it can be understood to the extent of that which is contrary to it, to that which is unsound and that which is sound doctrine.

[10 : 51] Also in 2 Timothy 3.16, all scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, which you learned, sorry, for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness.

So in the very word of God, we see the word doctrine that is used. Doctrine can be defined, it can be defined to contrast that which is contrary to sound doctrine to the point of reproof, correcting, and instructing in righteousness.

Some more texts, 1 Timothy 1.10, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. Again, there's a distinction that's made. 1 Timothy 4.16, take heed to yourself and to the doctrine.

2 Timothy 4.3-4, for the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers, and they will turn their ears away from the truth and be turned aside to fables.

So here we see a connection of sound doctrine and the truth, and not enduring sound doctrine of turning ears away from the truth. So in the New Testament, we see throughout it that the New Testament insists on true doctrine.

[12 : 21] Doctrine is teaching. So in terms of biblical doctrine, I'm going to make a statement here, putting together some theological terms which may come across as octane 91 type of terms.

So if it's if it's too confusing in the first pass, then afterwards, I'm going to summarize the essence of it with the second statement, which to bring the point home.

But doctrine is teaching. So in terms of biblical doctrine, it is a theological system or a careful formulation derived from exegetical, hermeneutical, and methodological analysis of God and the things about God from the Word of God.

So, in other words, to put it more simply, to put it quite simply, from Scripture as the principle of knowing, doctrine is teaching about God and how to live blessedly in this life and that which is to come.

So, is the Word of God important? Yes. Is God important? Yes. Is living blessedly in this life and the life that is to come important?

[13 : 37] Yes. Is doctrine important? Yes. Yes, doctrine is important. Doctrine is biblical. Doctrine can be defined. Doctrine can be sound and therefore that which is contrary to sound doctrine can be unsound and it can be understood.

In terms of that argument, that's actually quite popular, that's used, that doctrine divides. One of my favorite responses to that argument is, yes, doctrine does divide.

It divides between truth and error. So, in terms of division of what does divide, it is the departures from truth and doctrine that causes division.

So, the departures from truth causes division. Doctrine, then, doesn't cause division. Doctrine exposes the division that's there. Furthermore, in terms of the church, the church, as the pillar and ground of truth, is to increase in sound doctrine.

For example, the Great Commission, Matthew 28, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. So, teaching the disciples Christ commands.

[14 : 56] Then, Ephesians 4, we see, and he himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints, for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, that we should no longer be children tossed to and fro, carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting.

And then, Acts 2, 42, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship. So we see here, the first priority, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine, and by unity in apostles' doctrine, they therefore had unity in fellowship, and unity in doctrine and fellowship came the breaking of bread and the prayers.

So, narrowing in on our text here in Ephesians 1, verses 15-18, in the apostles' pastoral prayer, we're going to draw out and look at the characteristics of the apostles' pastoral prayer.

Three particular characteristics, the first one being thanksgiving, the second one being the object, and the third one being the intercession. Thanksgiving, the object, the intercession.

If you look in your text, in verse 16, it says, do not cease to give thanks for you.

[16 : 41] Who is the you? It's important that we fully understand this because of what Paul prays for, we need to understand who is the biblical and appropriate recipients of the things that Paul is praying for.

So, when Paul prays a prayer of thanksgiving for you, who's you here? So, of course, we want to look at the context of what we're looking at, which is the saints in Ephesus, which is a community of people chosen by God.

So, let's further understand this community of people chosen by God. Let's back up a bit. There is, they are, the community of people chosen by God consists of lost sinners redeemed from bondage to sin by the blood of Christ, poured out as a substitute on their behalf, applied to them by the word and spirit, having heard the word of truth and given the gift of faith enabled by the spirit to believe and united to Christ.

That is who is referred to. That is the you and that is crucial to understand as we look at what is prayed for in terms of the you.

So, let's push that even further to really understand the depths of the you and the context of the prayer. some might try to present salvation as being 50-50 contribution.

[18 : 12] This is not true. This is erroneous. This is not biblical. Salvation is not by 50-50 contribution. The only contribution that I made for my salvation is the sin that rendered me in need of salvation.

The you in this sense, salvation, as it is applied to them in the context of what we understand here is those whom verses 3-14 apply.

In other words, it is those whom have been chosen to be holy and blameless, predestined to adoption, who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ, who have been forgiven of their sins, and who have been sealed by the spirit as a down payment, as a guarantee of their inheritance.

The you is those who have been purposed by the Father, who is accomplished by the Son, and claimed by the Spirit.

This is important to understand because it helps highlight the depths of God's grace. Salvation is not a 50-50 contribution. It is necessary to understand, again, because it highlights the riches of God's glory.

[19 : 34] The lost, the unregenerate, or sinners, are not in agreement with God. They're not going in the direction of godliness, of holiness.

darkness. What the Bible tells us about the unregenerate, what the Bible tells us about the lost, is that they are not in agreement, but enmity, opposition, rebellion, and darkness.

Rebellion is not agreement. Opposition is not agreement. Enmity is not agreement. Amos 3.3 says, two cannot walk together unless they are agreed.

There is not agreement with God when lost sinners are rebelling against God in darkness, at enmity, in opposition of God.

That is the state of lost sinners in darkness when God calls them out of darkness into marvelous light. So how do those who are going away turn to God for salvation?

[20 : 39] they need to be born again, and that is by the quickening of the Holy Spirit, shining light in darkness, calling out of darkness, regenerating a new man, heart, mind, soul, and strength enabled to embrace Jesus Christ, to receive and rest upon him.

And that is the depth of God's grace. And this is something that is important to wrestle through for those who have not closed with Christ, for those who perhaps have had misconceptions, those coming out of a Roman Catholic system that think that salvation is by faith and works.

And particularly even for the kids, there's a lot of questions to wrestle with about who is God and why did God create me and what is my purpose which God created me for and importantly how can I be in a right standing before God.

So these are important questions to wrestle through. So it is important to understand that salvation is not accomplished by us.

It's not 50-50 contribution but salvation is of the Lord. And the Lord shines light in darkness calling lost sinners out of their state of darkness into marvelous light.

[22 : 04] So what is the response of the lost? Obviously the lost in their fallen nature cannot because they are not in agreement.

They are enmity, opposition, rebellion, darkness. But by the quickening of the Holy Spirit are enabled then to receive and rest on Christ.

So what is required of lost sinners is to repent. This is self-denial, turning to Christ alone for salvation, receiving Christ and resting on him.

Furthermore, in regards to the you that the apostle is praying for, we see the apostle's thankfulness in this apostolic prayer. The apostle's thankfulness is for, first of all, their good report.

So we see in their good reports it shows their orientation to God and their orientation to one another, namely, faith and love. So their faith, their orientation to God, the grace of faith, which is a gift of God, is the instrument of justification.

[23 : 25] This is important to understand, that the faith is not a saving act. However, it is the instrument of justification. So we think of instruments, for example, if we go to the dental hygienist, and the dental hygienist is cleaning our teeth with the instrument.

The instrument is just what is in the hand of the dental hygienist, it's the dental hygienist that is cleaning the teeth. Or consider a wrench in the hand of a mechanic. The mechanic is doing the work, the wrench is just an instrument the mechanic is using.

Or consider a painter, the paintbrush in his hand is not the paintbrush that does the artwork, it's the painter that uses the instrument. Faith is the instrument of justification, justification being the active and passive obedience of Christ imputed to us by the gift of faith enabled to receive Christ and rest on Christ.

Receiving and resting on Christ alone. By this faith, as our confession says, the second London confession of faith, by this faith, Christians believe to be true everything revealed in the word, recognizing it as the authority of God himself.

So their orientation to God is their faith, their orientation to one another, their love. Godly love is the fruit of faith. So how do we grow in godly love?

[24 : 48] Pray for God to increase our faith. Godly love is the fruit of faith. And true faith works by love. Love of the saints is evidence of a love for God and is consisting in works of charity without partiality.

John 13 says, by this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one another.

By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another. Furthermore, this apostolic, the apostles pastoral prayer, we see Paul's affection for them, remembering them, and praying for them.

We see the frequency, the posture, and his pastoral heart in his prayer. The frequency, he says, I do not cease. So this is a thankful attitude without intermission, just as like as we see in Romans 1 chapter 9, without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers.

We see also his posture, thanksgiving for the blessings that they received, thanksgiving for the work of God in them, thanksgiving for past benefits, that being faith and love.

[26 : 19] We see also his pastoral heart, an intercession in prayer for future blessings. He may give you wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and assurance, wisdom, and the spirit of wisdom, knowledge, the revelation and the knowledge of him, understanding, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, an assurance that you may know what the hope is.

Like the argument we considered earlier that doctrine divides, so also coexists arguments that question if it's important how we pray.

Isn't it good enough so long as we pray? So that brings us to our second point, the object of prayer. So what if I just pray to a higher power?

Whatever supreme being might receive my prayer, if there be a God, I'll offer up my prayer, and if there be a God, whatever supreme being there is, what if is that accepted?

What if I just pray in such a way? Or what about praying to a modalism God? That being a God that's, the belief that God consists in one person and takes on different modes instead of different persons, the Father, Son, and Spirit.

[27 : 45] What about praying to the God of Arianism and Jehovah's Witness, who deny the Trinity and the eternal divinity of Christ? Prayer must be to the proper object.

Prayer must be to the Trinitarian God in need of blood atonement, pleading the mediation and merits of Christ, and anything else is praying to an idol.

So praying to a God other than the Trinitarian God is praying to an idol. It is not the one true living God. It is idolatry, and the one who is praying remains lost in their sins and condemned.

So in this text, in looking at the substance or the object of prayer, we see just to the Father all-glorious, or in other translations, the Father of glory.

That being the source of all true glory, the first cause and fountainhead. Some subconsciously, whether subconsciously or intentionally, some invert who is the first cause when they pray.

[28 : 55] They would invert who is the first cause and place man, who is the creation, as the first God and God as reactionary or being caused by his creation or changed or moved by his creation.

Or some try to invent a more palatable or a more relatable version of God than how he has revealed to us in his word. by putting God in the bounds of time or projecting the limitations of man upon God who is the timeless, changeless, transcendent, other than infinite being.

He is the first cause, the Father all-glorious. Now, the scope of this text in the Apostles' Prayer and the substance of the Apostles' Prayer is unmistakably Trinitarian.

If you look to it in verse 15, sorry, in 17, it says, The God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom.

Now, we see here reference to all three persons of the Trinity, the Father, the Son, and the Spirit. Now, remembering that Paul did not cease to teach the Ephesians, the whole counsel of God, that includes the doctrine of God, that includes an understanding of who God is.

[30 : 27] And this reference implies and necessitates a fuller understanding of who God is from the Bible. Now, before we look at that, consider also this chapter in understanding God's work of redemption, we see further reference to God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

For example, verse 3 says, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Now, if we were to stop there, and that was the only verse that we read in the entire Bible, and tried to formulate our doctrine of God based on that verse, it could be confusing.

Some might look at it and say, well, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, if the Father is the God of Christ, he therefore must be creation and not divine himself.

Now, when we come to these interpretive challenges, it's important to address them correctly. We address these challenges with two particular rules.

First of them being that sacred scripture interprets scripture. So, where something might be confusing or unclear, we use the parts of scripture that are clear to help understand the unclear parts.

[31 : 52] Or, we use the parts that are clear to help with a careful formulation of the building blocks of the theology. The other one would be the rule of faith.

That the doctrines which are necessarily drawn from scripture and are irrefutable and necessary for the faith, we take that with us and apply that when we read a passage of scripture.

So, for example, we could use the Lord's Prayer, we could use the Ten Commandments.

If we interpret something in a way which is contrary to that thing, then we know that we're not harmonizing it with scripture. Scripture must interpret scripture. Or the Apostles Creed.

Or, for example, we could take the Nicene Creed, that which by the testimony of the church has held to as being correct and necessary understanding of the doctrine of God from scripture.

[32 : 53] We don't want to interpret a text in a way that contradicts these truths. So, this necessarily implies and requires an understanding of who God is.

This is blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have here greater depth of understanding of God and the understanding of the Trinity. First of all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ understanding the two natures of Christ and the one person.

So, the one person of Christ is the divine nature and the divine nature being the second person of the Trinity who is eternally begotten of the Father. And we also have the human nature, the human nature of Christ.

So, we have the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. the three persons, one God, one divine essence, one nature.

Three persons and one essence, not three distinct essences socially interrelating. So, what about when we're listening to a podcast or read an article or a magazine comes in the mail and we're reading something and there's these new modern contemporary and progressive trends about the doctrine of God or about the Trinity.

[34 : 15] New and different views that deviate from the tried, tested, and true traditional historic orthodoxy. We need to be aware of old heresies recycled into modern presentations and flair.

So, when we consider faith being receiving and resting on Christ, the receiving of Christ necessarily implies the ascent of the understanding to the truths of Christ revealed in the gospel.

Say, I believe. Well, you believe what? Well, I have faith, and faith is enough. What is the object of your faith? It must be Christ, his person, his divine nature, his human nature, his incarnation, his righteousness, his death, his satisfaction of sins, his resurrection, his ascension, and his offices.

Must be knowledge, understanding, and belief, an assured assent to the truth. So, the object of his prayer, moving on to the intercession.

This is a prayer for further blessings, or for increased knowledge of three particular things that we're going to draw on. First one being the hope of the calling, the second being the riches of the inheritance, and the third being the exceeding greatness of God's power.

[35 : 46] Some people would want to have the merits of Christ, or they would want to have the blessings of Christ, or they want to have the benefits of Christ, the gifts of Christ, but they don't want Christ.

They want his privilege, but not his person. They want his pardon, but not his government. So as such, Christ is not Lord of one's heart when that office is occupied by oneself.

Christ is not Lord over their thoughts, words, actions, their secrets, and their darling lusts. Christ has not been received and rested on.

Though they mouth the words, Lord and Lord, they remain in darkness and condemnation. remember, in this prayer, when Paul prays and thanks for past blessings and prays interceding for future blessings, he's praying for whom?

It's important to remember that. He's praying for those who have been called out of darkness into marvelous light by the word and spirit. Those who have been sealed by the spirit.

[37 : 00] Those who have not been are in darkness of mind, dead in sin, in enmity, in opposition, and in rebellion. Need to be called out of that state.

Called out of that state by the quickening of the spirit. This is regeneration or new creation, new man, new thoughts, new discourse, new life.

And as such, the gift of faith to embrace Jesus Christ and the continued benefits of the work of the indwelling spirit. So what Paul is praying for here is not for conversion to take place, not the work of regeneration of the spirit, but those who have been regenerated, those who have been called out of darkness into light, those who have had the accomplished work of redemption of Christ applied by the work of the spirit to them, having been sealed with the spirit, the continued benefits of the work of the indwelling spirit.

So he prays for an increased knowledge of a spirit of wisdom and revelation, which is imparted by the spirit of wisdom and revelation. This is spiritual understanding as God reveals by his spirit and his people understand by the spirit.

That's why we pray for the illumination of God's word, that he would enlighten our minds and our hearts. Those who are sealed by the spirit.

[38 : 38] So this is not a matter of academic memorization. However, it is truth that is spiritually discerned, spiritually discerned understanding that penetrates the mind, heart, and soul.

This is a personal knowledge of God, not just memorizing from scripture, knowledge about God, but this is personal, experiential, relational, two-way communion, knowledge of God.

Enlighten the eyes, it goes on to say, or the eyes of your heart, spiritual eyesight, that the eye is to the body, so the understanding is to the soul. Paul prays for a further degree of illumination.

God, who created light by the power of his word, gives illumination of the glorious knowledge of God. As in the tabernacle, recalling in the Old Testament, as in the tabernacle with God's tabernacling presence in their midst, as a type of gospel worship, the lampstand shone its light upon the bread of presence.

So, by God's illumination, causes his face to shine upon his gathered saints as they receive the bread that comes down from heaven, the wisdom of God, the word of God, that is, Christ.

[39 : 56] In other words, just as the mighty power of God that created all things, so also in the mighty power of the working of God in those who are chosen, predestined, redeemed, forgiven, sealed, those who are purposed by God the Father, purchased by God the Son, and claimed by God the Spirit.

Enlighten the eyes that they may know. This is knowing personally and experientially. Again, not just an academic memorization, but knowing personally and experientially.

The hope of his calling based on personal Christian experience. In other words, those who are recipients of verses 3 to 14, recipients of the last three sermons, recipients of being chosen by God the Father to be holy and blameless, predestined on to adoption, those who have been redeemed by the Son, by the blood of Christ, those who have been sealed by the Spirit, those who have been purposed by the Father, purchased by the Son, and claimed by the Spirit.

This is a fact of union with Christ. This is spiritual understanding. Spiritual understanding that is penetrating insight into divine realities, namely, hope of calling, the riches of glory of inheritance, and exceeding greatness, the power of God.

That the teaching in the eulogy, or the teaching in the doxology, the teaching in verses 3 to 14, the teaching that we see in the praise of God would be realized experientially through the ministry of the Spirit.

[41 : 49] it. So, the hope of the calling, the inheritance of the saints, and God's almighty power. The hope of his calling, how many times, when we consider the hope of his calling, how many times have you seen a big project started?

They get started in the project, they get invested into it, all sorts of money is poured into it, but before its completion, the funds are dried up and it's not completed. Or how many times have you been let down by someone who has made a commitment, but they have not held to that commitment, they have not kept their word and followed through?

God is not a man that he should lie or repent or change his mind. The gifts and calling of God are irrevocable. He is faithful, he will do it.

You may know the hope of the calling, the hope of his calling. This regeneration is a new birth to a living hope, as we see in 1 Peter 1.3.

A new birth to a living hope, says he has caused us to be born again, to a living hope, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who, by God's power, are being guarded through faith, for a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time.

[43 : 19] This hope is wrought in you by the gospel. It is a sure and firm anchor of the soul. It is the hope of glory. Furthermore, in Romans 8.30, it says, Moreover, whom he predestined, these also he called, whom he called, these he also justified, and whom he justified, these he also glorified.

The hope of his calling, the hope of glory. Also, the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and the apostles' prayer of intercession.

The riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. Psalm 16.5 says, You have cast my lot, the lines have fallen on rich land for me.

2 Corinthians 4.17, an incomparable eternal weight of glory. Hope, to know this hope because of the seal or the installment of the Holy Spirit as a promise, as a guarantee of future fulfillment.

Knowing this hope is not conditional upon my power, nor is it conditional upon a bank of power and a supposed treasury of merit, but knowing this hope is knowing personally and experientially what is the exceeding greatness of his power toward us.

[44 : 56] In our next sermon, we'll look more fully at the exceeding greatness of his power toward us. Now, in regards to further application, this letter was written, this pastoral letter was written to community people chosen by God for the purpose of fortification of a covenanted community of godly people growing in unity and love.

Galatians 6 says, therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith. Now, when we consider specific application, as a church plant community seeking to get off the ground, seeking to be built up as a biblical New Testament church, how do we seek to be biblically fortified and grow in unity and love?

Here, we have an apostolic letter to fortify a covenant community of God's people, to fortify them in unity and love.

Particularly in our age, we see amongst us and amongst churches and how churches decide on how they are to function or to operate. There are the threats of pragmatism, individualism, and consumerism.

Pragmatism, trying to find the direct line to get the results that we want, to take shortcuts, to look over the method to get to the end.

[46 : 42] Or in individualism, that's my personal identity or my personal feelings or my personal beliefs must be what the truth is and it must conform to me.

Or, of course, consumerism, to think that church or worship is about myself. So amongst these threats, whatever real in the churches around us, we who are a church plant community, we have much application here.

First of all, as we seek to be the pillar and ground of truth, faith, first of all, we ought to desire and pray for an increase in wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and assurance, as we see that Paul prays here in his apostolic and pastoral prayer to covenantal community.

So we are to desire an increase in wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and assurance through sound doctrine. Secondly is my prayer. we are not to cease in prayer.

Remember, a posture of thanksgiving without intermission, not ceasing to pray. And thirdly, a desire, followed up with prayer, to increase as a community of people, as a covenant community of God's people, to pray for, to have a desire for an increase in faith, love, and hope amongst one another.

[48 : 24] Let's pray. Our great God, we praise you, that you are God. We thank you for what is contained in your word to help us to understand your almighty power, particularly the Lord, towards those of us whom you have called out of darkness into marvelous light, that we who were at enmity, opposition, rebellion, darkness, seeking to go our own way, that you, by the quickening work of your spirit, enabled us to turn and to embrace Jesus Christ and to receive and rest on Christ alone for salvation.

So, Lord, we praise you, that you who are eternal, timeless, infinite, transcendent, almighty God, that you purposed by choosing us to be holy and blameless, by predestining us unto adoption, that Christ accomplished the work of redemption by purchasing us through the shedding of his blood to pay our debt, that the Holy Spirit claimed us, sealing us, being sealed with the Spirit, as a guarantee of our inheritance.

And, Lord, as those whom are recipients of your work of redemption, recipients of the quickening of the Holy Spirit through the Word and the Spirit, I pray, Lord, that as we seek to grow as a community of godly people, to grow as the pillar and ground of church, to grow as a gospel believing, Bible believing, New Testament church, I pray, Lord, that you would grow us in unity and in faith, that you would grow us in an increase of wisdom and knowledge and understanding and assurance through sound doctrine.

I pray that you would grow us in prayer, that we would be praying without ceasing, without intermission, in a posture of thanksgiving for one another. And I pray, Lord, that you would increase our faith, that you would increase us in our orientation towards you, and as such, there would be an increase of fruit of love for another, as we grow in our love of you, that we would grow in our love of Christ's body.

I pray, Lord, that you would also increase in us our faith, our love, and our hope. I pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. If you'll take your duotang, we'll read through the Apostles' Creed.

[51 : 10] The first page in the duotang.