

Beau Carpenter

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[0 : 0 0] Now, this evening, we're going to be in the book of Ephesians, chapter number one. And the idea of this passage, I think maybe this is the way I'd like to introduce it.

You ever get a present ready for somebody, maybe it's a birthday present, a Christmas present, and you've spent just hours and hours on Amazon looking for the right thing, right?

Do you know how you go down the Amazon rabbit hole and it's like, is it the right color? Is it the right size? Is it the right model? There's like five different models that they all seem like they're the same thing. Did I get the right thing?

And you become invested in that gift, right? And you want to give it. And I do this. I obsess over these things. I don't know why, but I get in. It's in my mind. I'm thinking, oh, it's going to be wonderful.

I'm going to give it. And this person is going to be just as excited as I am. And then you give it. And then maybe the response isn't quite what you thought. They're like, oh, thanks.

[0 : 5 6] I'm so excited about this thing. And then where does that thing end up? In the closet. You know, hopefully it doesn't end up at Goodwill. That's when you know you're really messed up. But you've invested in this thing.

It's like, I just want you to know how wonderful it is. And I think what the Apostle Paul is trying to do here is he's trying to say to you and to me, I want you to get a hold of how wonderful this gift of salvation really is.

And really, it's not just the Apostle Paul, but it's God himself desiring that we would understand and we would know at a very deep level in the very core of our being what he has given us in Christ.

Because I tell you, that is the greatest gift. And when we get a hold of that, it changes our life. Let me give you two reasons I believe that we really have to get a hold of this. We really need to get a hold of exactly what the breadth and the expanse and the beauty of salvation is.

Because that is how we know the love of God. That is how we know the love of God. The love of God is expressed to us in Jesus Christ. Coming, dying on the cross, rising again.

[2 : 0 6] And with that, those facts of the gospel, there's all kinds of things that God does internally in our lives that we might not even be privy to once we get saved.

But God wants us to know about them. He wants you to know that he loves you. Simple as that. The second thing is belief and behavior are deeply interconnected. What you believe comes out in what you do.

And you really can't get around that. And every behavior struggle that we have comes from a belief issue. And that's one of the reasons I believe that God wants us to get a hold of this.

Because when we know the truth, we can live the truth. But if we don't know the truth and we haven't internalized the truth, we can't live the truth. And in fact, that's kind of the whole framework of the book of Ephesians.

If you've studied Ephesians, you may have seen that chapters 1 through 3, basically all those chapters say are, I love you, I love you, I love you.

[3 : 04] I've paid it all for you. I've changed your life. And I've given you everything you need in Jesus Christ. And then chapters 4 through 6 say, Now walk this way. Walk this way. Live in this manner.

Belief and behavior are deeply interconnected. You cannot separate them. And that's much like it says in the Colossians chapter 2 verse number 7. Excuse me, 6 and 7. I want to read these to you.

Colossians 2, 6 and 7. As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him, rooted and built up in Him, established in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving.

So that begs one question. So how do we get this deep, internalized, in the core of our being, understanding of all that God has done for us?

Well, Paul says, Here's what I'm going to do for you. I'm going to pray for you. Now, this strikes me as a little bit weird, right? Because if anybody could explain and say, Here's the whole list of what God has done for you.

[4 : 08] Don't you think Paul is the guy that could have done it? And we know that he did do that in writing much of the New Testament. He said, Hey, here's all the things that God gave you, and these are all the things that God's done in you.

But here, what does he say? He says, I want to pray for you. I want to pray for you. Because I believe the reason for this is that because our understanding, in the very core of our being, of all that God has done, it's only going to come as the Holy Spirit illuminates our hearts and our minds.

And that's not something man can do. But that's something that God can do. And we can join in that ministry of helping people turn the lights on, understanding just how much God loves them, just how entirely God loves them through prayer.

So we can pray for one another's faith. Would you read with me in Ephesians chapter number 1, verse 15? Look at what the scripture says here. Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, in love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers.

That's kind of the crux of this whole passage. Like Pastor Trent said, this is one whole sentence. Ephesians just blows my mind. I think Paul probably failed elementary school because he didn't learn to stop using run-on sentences.

[5 : 27] But God used those, so we're good with it. I think you need to take that to your teacher and say, hey, run-on sentences. They're okay. They're right here in the Bible. Verse number 16. Cease not 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 unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of His calling, and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality, and in power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.

And hath put all things under His feet and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all. Would you bow with me as we open up this message tonight?

Father, we come to you and we just ask that right now, your Holy Spirit would teach us, as we read and hear your word, and we look into your word, that you would take our hearts and you would open them up to understand a fresh vision of what it means that you have loved us.

God, we sing songs, and our kids, they sing songs about Jesus loving us. But God, I don't know that we've grasped that.

I don't know that I've grasped the enormity and the magnitude of what it means that you love me. And God, tonight I pray that if anything good comes out of this message, God, I ask that your Holy Spirit would work in the hearts of your children, that tonight, just a little bit more, their vision, their understanding of what it is that you have loved us and you've given your Son for us, I pray they'd be expanded a little bit more, that they'd see the wonder, the awesomeness that it is to be called the children of God, to know that you loved us, and not because of anything that we've done, but simply because you are love.

[7 : 56] You've chosen to show your love through your Son. God, tonight I want to pray for another group that might be in this room. It might be those that they don't know you as Savior. They've never trusted in you for the forgiveness of sins.

Maybe they doubt your love for you. God, I pray tonight your Word would illuminate their minds, that they would see what it is to know a God who loves us.

We praise things in Jesus' name. Amen. So Ephesians 1, it starts off and he says, I'm thanking God for you. I've heard of your faith. Man, I'm thanking God for your faith.

And you know, that's one of the things that's so interesting. And I think you've probably seen this as you've, you know, maybe visited other churches. The past couple months have been strange for Lauren and I and our family. You know, it was back in October was our last Sunday in our full-time, you know, ministry position.

And so we visit other places with friends and family. And one of the things that's amazing is when you see somebody's faith, when you see a group of people meeting around God's Word and you hear their songs that are songs of faith, it excites your heart because like, man, these are my people.

[9 : 03] They are people of faith and we can thank God for it. And then he says something else in this prayer. He says, I'm thanking God for your faith. For your love. And I'm asking God to do something in your life, to enlighten your eyes.

And there's really three things that he says, I want you to know. And those are to know the hope of God's calling, to know the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, and to know the exceeding greatness of his power towards us.

Now, take note of those for just a second and we're going to have to come back to them because before we get to that, I want to talk specifically about this idea that Paul says, you know what I'm going to do for you so that your faith might grow, so that you might understand God's love for you, I'm going to pray for you.

Because that really sounds too simple, doesn't it? Don't we need to teach? Don't we need to explain? Don't we need to write and create outlines and do lessons and all these things? And truly, those are important, right?

Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. But what Paul does here, his method, he says, you know what? I am going to pray for you and I'm going to trust God to work in your life and to do something that only he can do.

[10 : 12] I believe that's what's going on here. Would you back up with me to verse number 15 and 16? Let's start at the beginning there and we're going to work through a couple verses. Wherefore, I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and love unto all the saints, cease not to give thanks for you, that's the first one, but then making mention of you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.

That's quite a prayer request, isn't it? When's the last time we've maybe had in our prayer list or we've prayed together as a group and said, God, I'm just asking that you would give your people, what does he say?

The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. God, would your spirit help them to know, would you reveal yourself more and more to them so that they would know you more deeply.

That was his method. And you know, here's the first thing that I noticed about prayer. Maybe you want to write this down. Prayer is a God-given ministry that cannot be taken away. Prayer is a God-given ministry that cannot be taken away.

And this comes together because at this time, Paul, this was one of the prison epistles, Paul was restrained. He could not perhaps do the ministry that he wanted to do.

[11 : 29] One of the things I think we see about the Apostle Paul was that he loved people. He wanted to be with them. He wanted to talk to them about Jesus. He wanted people to hear the gospel. But at this time, what could he do?

He could write a letter and he could pray. And prayer was a ministry that no chains could hold back. Prayer was the thing that he could do on a day-by-day basis that God was going to use to change these people's lives when he was not even there.

You know, that's something that I want to maybe zoom in for a second. You know, Jesus said some things about prayer. What did Jesus say about prayer? He said that we were to always pray and not to faint.

In the book of Luke, he said in John 14, do we have this one on the screen? John 14, 12 to 14. This one kind of blew my mind as I was looking back at this in preparation for this message.

John chapter 14, this is where you get to Jesus teaching about he's going away to prepare a place. He's going to come back and get his disciples and then in 15, he's going to talk about abiding.

[12 : 34] But there's something that he says about prayer that's really just kind of shocking to me. Look what he says. Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also.

In greater works than these shall he do because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do. That the Father may be glorified in the Son.

If ye shall ask anything in my name, I will do it. Isn't that something? He says, you're going to do greater works. Why? Because I'm returning to my Father as an advocate for you and anything you ask in my name, the Father's going to do so he can be glorified.

You're going to see God do amazing things. How? Through prayer. Simply through prayer. Now, our point there, prayer is a God-given ministry that cannot be taken away.

I believe this is so important because it is opposite to what the world around us and even our culture, you know, as Americans, I think, says. Our culture says that we grade individuals based on their usefulness.

[13 : 39] How useful are you? How successful are you? How visible are your accomplishments? If you can show me what you've done and show me how useful you are, then I like you and you're important and you're valuable.

But prayer is something that's kind of invisible, unknown, not flashy. You're not going to stand up and say, hey, here's my prayer list and you know what? I'm going to check off all these things that, man, God has answered these prayers and it's just not that kind of thing.

That's not how it works. And it kind of goes opposite of the way that we value people and sometimes even ourselves. Think about this for a second.

What happens when you get laid up with a sickness or an injury and you can't do what you could and maybe you have to rely on somebody to help you?

I don't know about you, but the way I feel about that is I'm like, man, I hate asking people to help me with something because I feel like it makes me less valuable because I can't do what I should be able to do and it's just frustrating.

[14 : 40] I don't know if that might just be me. Maybe it's you too. I don't know. But we grade ourselves that way it might be that you get to a point in life and this is a really interesting conversation I've had with a number of people.

We all are going to come to a point in life when we simply cannot take care of ourselves like we once could. And we will, by reason of age or health, have to depend upon others.

And there's a very real struggle of who am I now that I can't do this? What is my value? What is my worth? Well, the scripture tells us that prayer is a ministry that no one can take away.

It is something highly valuable that we can partake in no matter what state we are in, no matter what we wish we could do, no matter what we're hindered from doing, no matter what our responsibilities might limit us from doing, we can pray.

And that is something that God values highly. In fact, wasn't it the apostles in the very beginning of Acts, they said, hey, we're going to devote ourselves to what? The word and prayer. Those are kind of two simple things, but he says, word, prayer, word, prayer, word, prayer.

[15 : 50] And for whatever reason, those words have been bouncing around my mind. Word and prayer. Are our lives aligned around word and prayer, word and prayer? Because those things do matter.

Second thing, prayer involves us with that which only God can do. Remember how kind of how we started, right? We said, Paul, he's imprisoned, he's praying for their faith, and he's praying that God, God's Holy Spirit would illuminate them so that they would understand.

You know, he could have written a whole lot more. He could have done, you know, who knows what. But he prayed. And I believe that's because Paul, his life was a pattern of the gifts that God had given him coupled with dependence on God, right?

He had a gift to speak or to write or to teach or to preach, all these things. But he was also fully dependent upon God, saying, you know what? It is God's work.

It is God's Holy Spirit that changes lives. It's not our intellect expanding, but it's the Holy Spirit changing lives. And we see that very clearly in verse number 17. Would you look at that with me?

[16 : 56] I turned away from Ephesians, so I've got to get back there. Back to verse number 17. He's going to highlight and say, this is all about what God is going to do through his Holy Spirit, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation, the knowledge of him.

Verse 18, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened, that ye may know what is the hope of his calling and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints. He says, listen, I'm just praying that God's Spirit would do a work in your life.

Could it be that our words are sometimes just simply insufficient? We can try and study and try to make the best outlines and the best explanations and read the books and we should do those things.

But somewhere along the way, I believe it comes down to, we must trust God's Holy Spirit to change lives, to convict of sin and to draw men to himself.

And that we get to engage in that work through prayer, which is kind of a crazy thing, that we can be a part of something that really only God can do.

[18 : 07] I can't change anybody's heart. I can't change anybody's life. The Word and the Holy Spirit, they will change lives. And the part that I get to play in that is proclaiming the Word and praying that God does the work.

And that's an amazing thing. And that's something that we should be focused on for those around us. You know, there's a temptation, I believe, to take things that are of faith, right? And try to explain them intellectually.

But it just doesn't work that way. Hebrews 11, chapter 11, verses 1 through 3. I love these verses because they kind of bend my mind in a weird way.

Listen to these. Now, faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. Verse number two, for by it the elders obtained a good report. And then verse three is where it really starts to twist things around for me.

Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God so that the things which are seen were not made of things which do appear. Is that verse a little bit of a mind-bender for you?

[19 : 09] It is for me. Because he's saying, listen, okay, we're talking about faith here, right? Hebrews 11 is kind of like that hall of faith. Everything is by faith, by faith, by faith.

Now, he says, through faith we understand. Usually understanding, we think about intellectual, right? A thought process, a study process. But he says, okay, how do we understand the creation of the world?

Through faith, right? Through faith. Not through reason, not through intellect. We understand it by faith. But there's this real temptation, I believe, in our day.

I don't know if it's our day or our society that, hey, we need an explanation. We need to explain. We need to reason it out for people. But here's the thing. There's some things that are simply faith.

And we're not going to get around that. What we do here, what churches are, they're based on faith in God's book. And there's no amount of reasoning that is going to convince someone who has hardened their heart towards God.

[20 : 11] The only thing that's going to change them is the Holy Spirit of God working in their hearts and lives. And so, he says, prayer, it involves us with what only God can do. Now, let's go down to the third one and we will close out here in just a couple minutes.

Pray for your brother to know God deeply. Pray for those around you to know God deeply. So, the idea, as I was studying this, and I tell you, I feel so insufficient to kind of explain this, expose it, whatever term you want to use, because it's just awesome.

It says, I'm praying for you. I thank God for you. I'm praying for you. I'm praying for your faith. I'm praying that God would illuminate your hearts and minds. And I'm praying in three specific areas that God would deepen your faith.

And I think these are things that we could even take as something of a model to say, hey, how can I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ? How can I pray for my spouse or my family?

Well, these are ways that we can pray. Let's look at them briefly before we close out. Pray for your brother to know God deeply. Let's look at verse number 18. Look at what he says. In verse number 18, the eyes of your understanding be enlightened that ye may know what is the hope of his calling.

[21 : 24] And I want to pause there for a second because he's going to give a couple things. The hope of his calling. The hope of his calling. He says, the riches of the glory of his inheritance and the saints. And there's one more. The hope of his calling.

Praying that God would help people understand the hope of his calling. What's the idea here? Well, the idea is that we have been called with a high calling. What does that mean?

We are called the children of God. At one time we weren't, but we were called out of darkness into light. We have been given this new identity as children of God, sons of God.

Something that is just mind-boggling if we think about it. Who are we that God would take people who lived in darkness, participated in darkness, were darkness, that he would call us into light and make us his children.

That's an amazing thing. I don't understand how that works, but God did it. It's a pretty cool thing. And so, what should I be praying for? I should be praying that my brothers and sisters in Christ, they would know the hope of your calling.

[22 : 26] I tried to write this out in a prayer. God, Father, I pray that my friends, they would know the hope of your calling. I pray that you would thrill their hearts with the knowledge that soon we will see Christ and be like Him.

My prayer is that this calling would encourage and motivate my brothers and sisters today. That they would look and say, my life is not a series of days and years and just a lifetime of going through this world, but it is a, we have a high calling before God that we are called the children of God and we are called to reflect Christ to this world.

I pray that that would encourage you. I pray that I would encourage Lauren. I pray that I encourage my friends who know Christ, this calling. Let's look at the second one real quick.

The riches of God's inheritance in the saints. Oh, and let me give you, there's a couple other things I wanted to add to this. I'm sorry, I got back up for a second. The hope of His calling, praying that we would live in anticipation.

We would live in anticipation. The second one, the riches of God's inheritance in the saints, praying that we would live in His love. Now, let's read that verse one more time and I know we're reading and rereading and rereading, but I think this is part of the process of how God's Word gets into our hearts and minds.

[23 : 45] Read this verse very carefully with me. And what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. Okay, you got the whose inheritance is whose and what belongs where is kind of what's going on here.

He's saying, what is the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints? Did you catch that? Because a lot of times we think about, okay, what am I getting from God?

But it's kind of the opposite. He's saying, what is this beautiful, glorious, magnificent thing that God has, the inheritance that God has in who?

In the saints. In you. All right, think about that for a second. This is another one of those mind-bending verses for me. I know that it's an amazing thing to be saved and all the things that I have in Christ.

That's wonderful. But God has something valuable in us. God has something valuable in me and in you that God would look upon you and say, you are my inheritance.

[24 : 45] You are something glorious. You are something beautiful. You are something that I'm receiving. Something that is worth an immense amount to me. You think about that word inheritance and usually that's like when you're talking about somebody's inheritance, like that's everything.

Everything. Receiving everything that their parents have. I mean, that's a big deal but what God is saying, what Paul is saying is I'm praying that you understand what it is that God looks upon you and me as his inheritance and on us as a beautiful, priceless treasure that he is receiving.

Anyone else confused? I am. I think that's why we need the Holy Spirit to help us on that one because we look at one another, well, maybe not necessarily one another but we might look at ourselves and say, man, I know me too well to truly believe that God is getting someone special when he got me.

Right? Because what do I see in myself? I see faults and failures but God sees our future as blood-bought children of God. I look at me and I see my weakness but he sees wealth.

I look at myself and I see a struggling sinner but he sees saints clothed in white. That's amazing. And so, live in his love.

[26 : 07] And so, you might pray something like this and this might be for you that you need to pray it for yourself. I was studying this and I'm like, man, I need to pray this for myself. I need to get a hold of this. But we should certainly be praying it for others. I pray for my brothers and sisters in Christ.

they would know just how valuable they are to God. God, I pray that you would warm their hearts with the knowledge that you know us and you love us completely.

God, I pray that you would help us to see that we are a precious treasure to you and you are anticipating welcoming us home.

That's pretty incredible, isn't it? That God would look on people like us and say, I'm looking forward to getting you home. I'm looking forward to having you with me.

Isn't that what Jesus said, right? I go to prepare a place for you. We are something, a people, that God values highly. And you might not feel like it tonight, but He does.

[27 : 11] And what do we need to pray for one another? That the Holy Spirit would remind us, would help us to understand that fact. All right, one more, one more. The greatness, the greatness of His power usward, okay?

Let's look at the last, verse number 19 and we'll close out here. And was the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of His mighty power which He wrought in Christ.

Now, I'm going to have to pause right there because this is where Paul just, he goes crazy and he writes out all the things and saying, this is all the power that God showed in Christ and He's done this and He's done this and He's done this. But think about this as we close out.

God, I pray that my brothers and sisters, we would simply live in awe. We would simply live in awe of what Jesus, God has done through Jesus on our behalf.

The power that He has shown usward. You know, in the Old Testament, I believe in the Old Testament, the power of God is highlighted in the creation and in God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt.

[28 : 10] I mean, especially if you read through, as you read through Psalms, that's kind of one of the themes that comes up. God, you made everything and God, you delivered your people. But in the New Testament, how is God's power revealed?

It's revealed in Christ working on our behalf. That's where the power of God shows up. He raised Him from the dead. He set Him at His right hand. He put all things under His feet and He gave Him to be head of the church.

So how could we pray this? We could pray something like this. Father, I pray for my brothers and sisters that they would know the greatness of Your power towards them. I pray that You would remind them that You have shown amazing power in saving them.

May they live in awe of who You are and what You've done on their behalf. Live in awe. Live in awe. So tonight, a couple things to think of as we close. Do you know what God has given you in Christ?

I think you do. You do. You're versed in the Scripture. You've read the Bible. But friends, have you gotten a hold of it? Has it gone from an intellectual study, pursuit, to a heart level?

[29 : 13] Man, God loves me. God has shown power on my behalf. I get to enjoy something of that, like I am part of this thing.

In fact, He is looking forward to receiving me home and He considers me a valuable possession of His, a valuable treasure of His. Or are you discouraged?

In your heart, maybe you wonder, does God really love me right now where I'm at? And the answer is yes. And the answer is yes.

And one of the things that I believe a church ought to do is pray for one another that the Spirit would help these things become deeply ingrained within us. That man, yes, I know His power.

And yes, I know more and more every day about the height and the depth and the breadth and the length and just the measure of God's love. It's an amazing thing that God's done for us. And it's something that, I don't know if any Bible study is going to help us to grasp that, get a hold of it so that it might be part of who we are.

[30 : 20] But the Holy Spirit of God, He can help us lay hands on the truth of all that God has done for us. Would you minister to the family through prayer?

Don't neglect it, friends. Let those two words rattle around your mind. Word, prayer, word, prayer, word, prayer. They go together and they can't be separated. They're both a part of the ministry.

And finally, if you're here tonight, you're not saved. You know, maybe you've come in and this has been all very strange. You sing and you pray and you talk about stuff and you have all these different things going on. And maybe you look at Christianity as something of a system of rules.

Maybe it's about going to church, about being a moral person, being a good person. But friends, that's not what it's about. The gospel is that God takes people who have sinned, who are sinners, and He offers them something that they cannot do for themselves.

I've done wrong. I don't deserve God's love, but He offered it for me. He offers it as a free gift. And all He asks is that you would believe, that you would believe in Him, trust in what He's done to save you from your sins.

[31 : 22] He sent His Son to die for you. He died a horrific, horrific, painful death in your place. He loves you. His Son was buried and His Son rose again. If you'll simply trust Him, He'll change your life.

Would you bow with me? Father, we come to you tonight. God, I pray as we've gathered together in this room, God, I don't know all the different things going on or what's happening on the inside in each heart and life, but God, You do.

and Your Holy Spirit wants to take Your Word and speak to hearts and lives. God, I pray tonight for this congregation that there would be a renewed, expanded vision of who You are and how much You love us.

God, I pray that this would continue to be a place of prayer where we are praying for one another, that God, You would do in each heart and life what only You can do.

God, I pray if there's somebody who's discouraged tonight, maybe they feel like quitting, they feel like giving up, they feel like they're not lovable, they're not loved, God, I pray that right now Your Spirit would speak to them in these last few moments of the service and let them know You do love them.

[32 : 37] You love them more than they can understand. And nothing's going to change that.