

The Blessing Of Prayer  
Ephesians: Blessed Beyond Belief- Part 2  
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## Introduction:

There are three main sections on prayer in Ephesians:

- **Ephesians 1:15-20**
- **Ephesians 3:14-21**
- **Ephesians 6:18-20**

From Paul, we learn that **LifeChanging** prayer is:

### A. Persistent.

<sup>15</sup> *Ever since I first heard of your strong faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for God's people everywhere,* <sup>16</sup> ***I have not stopped*** thanking God for you. ***I pray for you constantly,***

Paul says, *I have not stopped...I pray for you constantly.* What does that mean? It is consistent with what Paul said in 1 Thessalonians 5:17 where Paul said, *"Never stop praying"*. But, how can anyone do that? Does he mean you are supposed to pray morning, noon, night... while working, playing, eating, sleeping, grooming... *How is that possible for anyone that works or has kids or wants to sleep...*

Certainly this was a challenge for Paul. He was a busy guy. He traveled. He was a tent-maker, meaning that he worked another job to support himself so he wouldn't be a burden to the people he served. He was imprisoned. He was beaten. He was a prolific writer. He didn't have a lot of spare time. *How do you pray constantly?*

What this passage means is this: Paul is saying, *I have not stopped...I have not and will not give up on praying for you.* This is a statement of Paul's commitment to keep praying for them. It is a promise to persist in prayer. This is the opposite of "out of sight, out of mind". Even though Paul wasn't with them... he would pray and he would not give up.

### Ephesians 6:18

<sup>18</sup> ***Pray in the Spirit at all times and on every occasion.*** *Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all believers everywhere.*

The challenge here for you and me is: *How often do we promise to pray for someone and then forget about it after a day or two... or after a few minutes or two?* This implies that Paul was committed to prayer. **It implies he saw one of his main ministry opportunities as prayer.** Prayer was important to him- for his own relationship to God and for spiritual movement in the lives of the people he was developing for effective service for God. It implies, to me, that he must have had a

system for prayer. He had to have a way to remember to pray for...and to remember what to pray for...all the people he had promised to pray for.

*Who do you pray for? How can you persist? Keep a prayer journal? Make a phone call and pray together? Send a note to let someone know that you love them and will commit to pray? **We've got to practice this...not just give lip service to it.***

## **B. (LIFE CHANGING PRAYER IS...) Directed To God**

Ephesians 1:16-17

*I pray for you constantly,<sup>17</sup> asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ...*

### **Ephesians 3:14-15**

*<sup>14</sup> When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father,<sup>15</sup> the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth.*

**Why is this so important?** *Paul prayed to God because he knew Him. He loved God. He wanted to connect intimately with God. **Paul knew that God was the source for what he needed in his life and what his readers needed.** In God is where strength is found. In Him, is where hope and peace and forgiveness and love and strength and perseverance have their source. God was Paul's answer...his resource.*

### **Ephesians 3:16**

*<sup>16</sup> I pray **that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit.***

*Are we going to God with our needs?*

- He loves you.
- He wants to meet with you.
- He's waiting for you.
- He created you... He knows every part of your heart.
- He has all you need- help, strength, creativity, answers, healing...

*Will you meet with God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ this week? What time have you set aside for this? Where is your special place to meet God?*

## **C. (LIFE CHANGING PRAYER IS...) Spiritually Focused**

Paul prayed for 5 things. He asked God to do 5 things in the lives of His readers.

Ephesians 1:17-20

*<sup>17</sup> asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God. <sup>18</sup> I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.*

*<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power<sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead*

### **1. He asked God to give them spiritual wisdom and insight (vs.17).**

Paul longed for God to give his readers spiritual wisdom and insight. What Paul means by spiritual wisdom is that he wanted his readers to know God's ways and God's plan. He wanted his readers to have a full understanding of God's righteousness and the principles found in God's word. *Wisdom is thinking like God.*

But, Paul didn't want his readers just to know about God and His ways. He wanted his readers to be able to apply God's way of thinking to the circumstance they would find themselves in in everyday life. That's insight. *Insight is the same as understanding. It is the practical outworking of wisdom in the situations of everyday life.*

When I have God's wisdom and insight- I can look at life as God does. I can see what God sees. I can act as God would want me to act. *I have a spiritual perspective.*

For example:

- Culture says: *Buy whatever you can, whether you have cash to pay it or not. Amass wealth...store up stuff...go after security at all costs.* But, real wisdom...a Godly perspective says: *God owns it all. He's given me a portion to steward for His purposes.* Real insight then...understanding...means that before I spend a dime of my paycheck I prayerfully seek out God's priorities for His money.
- Say I have an argument with someone at work. What comes natural might be to gossip about the person with others. I might feel like avoiding them and harboring bitterness in my heart. But, Godly wisdom says *I have been forgiven... I must forgive.* Insight then leads us to pursue peace at all costs.
- My neighbor is annoying. My tendency can be ignore him or even worse- find ways to annoy him back. But, Godly wisdom says *apart from Christ, this man is destined for eternity in Hell. What He needs is Jesus. And, I am the one God has appointed to share Jesus with him.* Insight then leads me to build a relationship over time with a plan to share the truth of Jesus when the time is right.

Paul wants his readers to know God enough that they know God's mind as they walk through life. Then he wants his readers to love God enough to do exactly as God would want them to do.

### **2. He asked God to help them understand their hope (vs. 18).**

<sup>18</sup> *I pray that your hearts will be flooded with light so that you can understand the confident hope he has given to those he called—his holy people who are his rich and glorious inheritance.*<sup>lg</sup>

This is really amazing. Paul is praying that the God, through the Holy Spirit, who resides in the heart of the believer, would take a spiritual flashlight and illumine God's plan in the mind of the Christ-follower. See, God knows we will get enamored with life on earth. He knows the cares and concerns of this world will begin to consume us. He knows we'll get distracted from loving Him and doing His work by work and houses and cars and debt and health problems and...

So, Paul prays that God would remind us of what is most important...the hope God has given to those He called. We talked about this last week. God has chosen you. God has redeemed you. God has given you a special role in His Kingdom work. God has promised you a place in heaven. This world is not all that there is. God is preparing a special future for you. As we read earlier from 2 Corinthians 4- the challenges you are facing here will last only for a time—you have eternal joy and fulfillment to look forward to with Jesus!

**God has given us hope!** Today isn't just about today. There is a tomorrow... a tomorrow filled with new blessings from God. New possibilities. New workings of God that we have not yet seen. What you are experiencing now is not forever... There will come a day when you will be healed from that ailment. When that temptation will no longer have a hold on you. When that ache in your heart will be fulfilled. There is hope in Jesus- for today and forever!

**God has a special future planned for you!** We are His rich and glorious inheritance! We can anticipate heaven... where the cares and concerns of this life will be replaced with perfect bodies, worship of Jesus, no more tears...

**We have to learn to take more of a long range view of life.** We have to learn to see life with hope. See life through how God views us. Anticipate Heaven... *This is what Paul wanted for his readers... to revel in God's plan.*

### **3. He asked God to help them understand His power (vs.19).**

*<sup>19</sup> I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God's power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power <sup>20</sup> that raised Christ from the dead*

#### **Illustration:**

Seth and Silas. Silas is bigger...but get's beat up. He isn't harnessing his advantage. He isn't accessing his potential.

We're like that. There is so much power at our disposal...but we miss it. Sometimes we give into temptation. We feel like we can't beat that compulsion. We can't get up early enough to spend time with God. We can't face our boss and say "No." We're scared to really live a radically committed life for Jesus in front of our neighbors or friends.

*Why? The power is there. The same power that raised Christ from the dead. Paul was concerned about his readers missing it too. So, he prayed they would get it. He prayed they would see it and recognize their power source and harness it and live a victorious life for Jesus.*

*Imagine...a person that sees life as God does...they have a spiritual perspective—God’s wisdom and insight. Not only that, but they revel, everyday in the fact that God called them and has a special, eternal plan for them. They exude hope! And, they are vibrant, strong, consistent examples of Godliness...you can see God’s power at work in them. This is what Paul prayed for his readers....*

**But, there is more...**

### **Ephesians 3:16**

*<sup>16</sup> I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit...*

#### **4. He asked God to empower them with inner strength (3:16).**

Strength for the believer was a big deal to Paul. He prayed in 1:19 that we would understand the strength we have- the same power that raised Christ from the dead. Now...here, Paul is praying that God would give them inner strength through the ultimate power source- the Holy Spirit.

One of the study aids I’m using for this series is written by a friend of mine named Tom Julien. I like how he defines “spiritual power” that Paul refers to hear. He writes: *Spiritual power is the ability God gives us through His Spirit to act according to His will.* Paul was praying that God, through His *glorious, unlimited resources*, would give you the strength to live out God’s will in your every day life.

Ever feel like you don’t have what it takes to do what God wants you to do? You do. You have all the power you need and more to live in righteousness and accomplish the good things that God has planned in advance for you to do.

- You have the spiritual power available to go and make that relationship right.
- You have the spiritual power to keep going when you feel like quitting.

*What would it look like if a few of us grasped this? What would it look like if only a handful of us began harnessing the incredible power of God for the work of God? It wouldn’t matter how many people were part of our church... big things would be happening.* It is worth noting that we have been discussing all of these truths individualistically. But, they are really written to the Church as a whole. Paul’s intention is that whole groups of people grasp these truths together.

**5. He asked God to give them power to understand and experience His love (3:18-19).**

*<sup>18</sup> And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. <sup>19</sup> May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.*

It is kind of interesting to note that Paul is praying for understanding for something that he says can't really be understood anyway. That's what makes God's love so amazing. It is too large to fully understand. But, we can grasp it at some level. Even as finite beings- we understand love and we can start to wrap our minds around unconditional love. So, Paul prays that God would fill us to capacity- help us see God's love fully.

He pictures God's love with sweeping words. It is *wide, long, high, and deep-beyond understanding*. Trish and I have gotten hooked on *Lost*. Have any of you watched that show? We never watched it while it was actually on TV...but started last week with episode one of season one on Netflix. It is set on a deserted island. They show a lot of scenes with incredible views of the ocean. I haven't been to the beach in a long time... but when I am there- I'm always amazed at the horizon- how long, and far, and high and deep is the water God created—**his love is greater than that**.

**What would happen if we really grasped God's love for us?** *Can you imagine being so consumed with God's love...so filled by experiencing His love that you didn't need false fulfillment from any other temporal source?*

- We would never be seeking after the adulation of people.
- We would never be living out of or held back by fear of what others would think or do.
- We would never be addicted to habits that hang ups that wasted time or harmed our physical bodies.

Paul wanted us to experience Christ's love so that we would be *made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God*.

**God loves you so much... grasping that, savoring that, drinking that in, appropriating God's love... teaching our children and everyone around us to do the same... living in God's love together—is one of the main secrets to living the Christian life.**

**D. Missional**

**Ephesians 6:19-20**

*<sup>19</sup> And pray for me, too. Ask God to give me the right words so I can boldly explain God's mysterious plan that the Good News is for Jews and Gentiles alike. <sup>20</sup> I am in chains now, still preaching this message as God's ambassador. So pray that I will keep on speaking boldly for him, as I should.*

A few weeks ago, I shared a message on a renewed vision for ClearView. The gist of this message was my passion to see us refocus on the reason why our church was started- mission. *We purpose to love people to a clear view of Jesus and His mission.* My hope is that together we can work toward every member of our spiritual...

### **E. Powerful**

#### **Ephesians 3:17, 20**

*<sup>17</sup> Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong...<sup>20</sup> Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think.*

#### **Conclusion:**

- You will be blessed if you pray these requests for your own life.
- You will bless others if you pray these requests for them.
- *Would you push yourself forward to transform your prayer life from earthly to eternal?*
- *God, I pray for each person here this morning...for the individuals here and for our church as a whole:*
  - Please give us wisdom and insight to know and do your will so that we might grow in our knowledge of you.
  - Please give us full awareness of the eternal hope you have given us.
  - Please help us understand the power that lives inside of us- the same power that raised you from the dead, Jesus.
  - Please give us inner strength to do your will each moment of today.
  - Please help us understand and experience your love so we can be made complete in you.
  - Please help us boldly share the Good News about you with others Jesus.
  - Please do in and through us more than we might ask or think—for your great glory.