

# Rick Miller – Prayer – Jan 8, 2023

I know in your bulletin it says we're in Isaiah 33, but having a bit of a change. I gave that information to Mary yesterday, I think, but last night and this morning I just couldn't get a peace about that. I felt like the Lord was speaking to me about continuing to talk about prayer.

Last week we talked about prayer from John 17, the high priestly prayer of Jesus, right? Right before he went to the cross, and I don't know, it's just been on my heart the last few weeks, like the Lord's been speaking to me personally about prayer, and I wanted to share some of that with you guys today. So a New Year's, number two encouragement for us.

Looking forward to what God is calling us to. I think prayer is a huge part of that. So I want to start out in John 17 and quickly review part of that we talked about last week. Then I want to go on to talk about some of the prayers of Paul and the prayer life of Paul.

So let's pray. Lord, we do pray that you encourage us all in prayer and that we can catch this vision this morning and follow your perfect example, Jesus, of your prayer life. Of course, we'll never be perfect, but we can strive to follow the example set before us and what the spirit is calling us to.

And so we pray we have ears to hear this morning what you're saying, and yield our hearts to what you're calling us to. In Jesus' name, Amen.

So, the prayer life of Paul, I want to look at that. I want to, as I said, look at John 17, the prayer of Jesus.

And yeah, it's been on my heart, a sense from the Lord calling me personally to a place of intercessory prayer. I've always felt this calling to intercessory prayer, even as a young Christian. Some influences I had, some books I read, and my grandmother, both my grandmothers were prayer warriors.

And I've learned a lot about prayer over the years. How weak I am for one thing, and how far short I fall of praying as I ought to pray. And yet learning not to let discouragement overcome me. So you can get the vision for prayer. You might read a book on prayer.

There's an author called Bounds. He has a lot of books on prayer. You can read a book on prayer and get all pumped up and get excited. Say, yeah, I'm going to start praying, I'm going to get up at four o'clock in the morning like this guy did, pray for three hours and then, you know, your alarm goes off.

It's seven o'clock. Oh, I blew it. I messed up. And I guess I don't have what it takes, so it is important to get the vision and to read examples and you are reading in the scripture of great men of prayer. Read through the psalms. That's basically all prayer, teaching us how to pray.

As we read through the scriptures, we see many great examples of prayer and we do need to get that vision and that calling to prayer. But we also need to remember we really don't have the power in ourselves to do it. And that's where we talk a lot about grace around here. Grace isn't just for forgiveness of sin.

It's like, oh, it doesn't matter what I do because grace will cover it. That's a misunderstanding of grace. That's a big part of grace. Not that we're cavalier about sin. Yes, we have to walk in the forgiveness of Christ every day because we sin every day. But grace's power to live a godly life and to have an effect on prayer life, is part of a godly life.

And so to be able to say, Lord, I see the vision. I see the calling, but I'm so weak. I need your power every day to resurrect me, to pray as I ought to. And Holy Spirit empower me to pray. And I find often in my prayer times, a lot of the time, I'm just waiting on God for power to pray. As I ought to pray.

It says in Romans 8 we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself makes intercession with groanings too deep for words. It's a supernatural calling. Or if you look at the armor of God in Ephesians 6. I don't have time to go into some of these scriptures in depth, but a lot of you know these scriptures.

It says put on the full armor. If you notice at the end of that it says, then having done all to stand, stand therefore and then pray in the Spirit it says. It's almost like you're suiting up with the armor of God to pray, to intercede, because of course, we know it's prayer that's going to move mountains.

It's prayer that's going to bring revival. And that's one of the things the Lord is stirring in my heart, that he does want to bring revival in our lives. We say we need revival in the nation. We need revival in my life first, and in your life. So let's start with ourselves, where you're just on fire for the Lord.

You're excited about prayer. Who gets excited about prayer? I've been to several churches in my life, and you know what the least attended meeting always is? It's the prayer meeting. And I'm not saying that out of judgment, and being critical. I'm just saying most people don't get very excited about prayer.

But when you catch that vision and you see what's possible in intercessory prayer, and you see you can do this because if you fell down in weakness at the feet of Jesus and say, Lord, will you anoint me with the power to pray, you don't think he's going to answer that prayer? You don't think he wants you to be a prayer warrior?

Of course he's going to answer that prayer. Now, it may take some time of continually going back to him and saying, Lord I'm still not feeling and I'm not sensing that power. I'm still being overcome by other things. Lord, would you empower me? I need to have, dare I say it, the prayer life of Jesus. Are we not given his very life?

Isn't that what the cross is all about? We died on that cross - our self, our sinful self, our religious self, our self-righteousness and then we rose with him to new life. And part of that new life is, it is no longer I who live, but it's Jesus who lives in me. And the life that I now live, I live by faith in the Son of God.

Paul said that. It's no longer I who live, it's Christ who lives in me. So isn't that part of his life? Living through me is his prayer life. If you want to see the prayer life of Jesus, and we might do this next week, go through the Book of Luke and you'll see the emphasis on the prayer life of Jesus, that he got up early and he was out praying on his own.

Then the disciples went after him. Lord, you need to come back to this city because everybody's looking for you. You're so popular in this city. "No, we need to go on to the next city. This is what my father has told me to do." So Jesus, of course, connected with the Father, but even as the perfect sinless son of God, he needed time alone with God to pray.

And so the calling to prayer is important for us to hear that calling by the spirit because the Lord wants to bring revival. And if you study any revivals, it always started with prayer. It always starts with prayer.

We get so much junk mail, right? Most of it right into the trash. Even some of the Christian junk mail, I'm like, I can't do everything man. I can't read every letter. But one I was about to throw away and Oh, it's Greg Laurie, and it said

do you believe God can bring revival? And I was like, okay, I'm keeping this one and I'm going to read this, but I know Greg, that's been on his heart.

If you know who Greg Laurie is, he's like Billy Graham, evangelist, who has these big stadium crusades and it's been on his heart to pray for revival for our country. But don't we all have to feel that from the spirit ourselves because life is so busy. We're so overwhelmed with other things that it can choke out the most important things.

Jesus taught that parable that, right? The seed of righteousness and God's calling in your life can easily be choked out by worry, stress, the pleasure for other things. Money, you've got too many hobbies going on. I don't have time for church. I don't have time for prayer meeting. I don't have time for my own prayer time with the Lord.

Don't you find that you have to prioritize that time along with God? If you just kind of wait - I'll get to it at the end of the day. Good luck. Sometimes that works for me. I'll take a late night, prayer walk, but usually it's like I almost have to plan my day around it. And doesn't that make sense?

To spend time with God, isn't that kind of important that we would say that's the most important thing on my to-do list today. The earlier, the better just to make sure I get that done. And then of course, praying throughout the day. Vikki and I were talking about that this morning. I've just sensed the Lord is doing something different in my heart. I was teaching the kids. I teach math to the kids for an hour or so a week.

Some of the kids, you know, have attention issues, right? They get distracted real, real easy and I'm sure none of your kids do that, but, you're trying to get them to focus on math. They're not really into it. And I could just sit there and say, hey, quit talking. Get back to it. Almost be like a nag.

And the Lord was speaking to my heart, like, why don't you pray? Why don't you walk around and pray for these kids. Of course I pray for them all the time, but no, like in the class while you're teaching them intercessory prayer. Are you serious about this, Rick?

And I'm like, okay. Not that you can't correct your kids or kids, but maybe pray first and say, Lord I can see they're struggling over there and they're getting distracted and they're zoning out. Lord, would you help them?

And then all of a sudden you see God answer that, right? And it's the small stuff, right? We have to learn to pray in this small stuff, whatever we're doing, and for the people God's called us to minister to, whether it's your own children or others.

Then you see a change in that, and you're like, God, you just touched him. And I don't even need to tell him I was praying for you. You know what I'm saying? It's like where God's calling you to a higher place of prayer. I could see the Lord saying, come up here, come up here. I want to take you to that higher place of intercessory prayer.

That's where we really see change, isn't it? You see your spouse, like I would say, you have a front row seat to the faults of your spouse and you're going to nag them to get them to change, or you see things that need to change. Or instead, are you going to be a prayer warrior for them?

I'm sure they would appreciate that, rather than you being the law. I really think we're to be grace, again not that we can ever say, Hey, I wish you wouldn't do that or say that. Of course we have communication about issues, but maybe pray about it first even before you say that thing and just say, Lord, help them.

I know they don't want to hurt me, or they don't want to neglect me. They want to be a good spouse and I pray for them, Lord, that they could. And I've said this before, we'll stand before the Lord and say, Lord, why didn't you give me a better spouse?

And the Lord's like, I was calling you to pray. My plan was to make them better. But it was through your prayer. And we're like, oh, sorry. There is a responsibility of intercessory prayer for our spouses. And then take that circle and just grow it out. For our spouse, the closest person to us, our spouse, our children, our immediate family, extended family, our friends, and our church.

You're just like a prayer warrior asking God to move in the lives of those around you and you start to see God answer. You start to see the Lord move mountains. The prayer promises, I could list them all to you. I don't have time. But they're outrageous. They really are.

Jesus said, you could move mountains. If you said to this mountain, be taken up and cast into the sea, obviously, he's not talking about literal mountains. He's trying to take the most extreme example and say you can really have a huge impact on this world through your prayer life if you will believe. You have to believe, you have to be abiding.

John 15 says, if you'll abide in me, and I abide in you, you have that closeness with Jesus. In John 17 last week we talked about that oneness with God, and then he says, ask me anything and I'll do it. And people don't understand. What is that? What do you mean anything? I want a new Cadillac Lord, No, he's talking about if you're my disciple and you're abiding in me, then you're connected with the heart of God and the will of God, and you're going to pray according to God's will and his purposes, but you cannot discount those wide open promises. One of the scriptures we were memorizing in children's chapel, I think it's John 14:14 - Hearing the little kids say this, "Ask me anything and I will do it."

That's what Jesus said. And the way I explained that to them is that he wants to be involved in everything in your life, all through the day. Ask him anything, small things, medium size. And then when the big things come, you're not going to freak out. You're already learning to pray. You know how to pray.

Maybe we should get into the Bible today. So let's go to John 17. I know you Calvary Chapel people are really big on the Bible, so I can't just be quoting scripture willy-nilly. I have to take you to a text ...

And you think I'm joking. I've had people come up after a sermon, are we going topical now? Aren't we going through the Bible? I'm like, just calm down, we're just having a little mini-series here. We'll be back going through the Bible, verse by verse, so we get the proper context. But I appreciate that heart of wanting to go through the word, but just don't get crazy on me.

So let's go to John 17.

Of course, John 17, the whole chapter is a prayer. It's Jesus praying right before he goes to the cross. And we went over that last week. So I'm just going to quickly read the last part of it to remind us of the last thing he did, literally, before he walked into the garden to take upon himself our sins.

In John 17:20 Jesus says, *"I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they all may be one as you Father are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us that the world may believe that you sent me."* So we talked about that oneness that each individual believer has with the Father, Son, Holy Spirit. Amazing!

Of course this is the whole change from the old covenant to the new covenant. Now we are the temple of God. When Jesus said it is finished and the curtain was torn in the temple, and you could walk right into the Holy of Holies, now

that's what God is saying. That's a pretty radical change, that we could be so cleansed of our sin that we could be the temple of God.

And so he's saying that oneness, if you as individual believers understand the oneness you have with God, and we need the Holy Spirit to illuminate what that means to us because it's so powerful. Then he says, if you guys are one with one another as a church, we get along with each other.

We know how to love one another, serve one another. Then the world will believe when they see the church behaving in that way,

Verse 22, *“and the glory which you gave me, I have given them that they may be one just as we are one, I in them and You in me, that they may be made perfect in one that the world may know that you have sent me and have loved them as you have loved me. Father, I desire that they also, whom you gave me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which you have given me, for you loved me before the foundation of the world. Oh righteous Father, the world has not known you, but I have known you. And these have known that you sent me. And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it, that the love with which you loved me may be in them and I in them.”*

Beautiful prayer of Jesus. Let's turn over to Philippians 4 and look at a scripture on prayer. Philippians 4:6.

Philippians 4, I'm sure many of you have this memorized. *“Be anxious for nothing but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”* So you see the answer for anxiety is prayer and supplication with thanksgiving and making your request known to God.

Then you'll have the peace of God. Isn't it amazing? It is a peace that passes understanding. It doesn't make sense that you would be peaceful in whatever difficulty you're in. That you were anxious about and you just prayed about it. You just gave it over to the Lord. And yet that peace comes when you can give it over to God and just rest in that.

And man, we have an epidemic of anxiety in our culture today, don't we? And yet we have the answer to that epidemic. It's prayer. It's really coming before God and not letting those cares weigh you down, right? You're not going to be effective in prayer if you're anxious all the time. If you haven't learned to pray

about your own issues, you're never going to learn to pray for others or be effective.

So this is an important scripture that we can be reminded of. That the Holy Spirit would remind us as we're thinking through something, we're anxious about it, just turn that whole process of trying to analyze the issue, turn it into prayer. Just talk to God about it, well Lord, I feel upset about this.

Lord I'm asking you to work in this situation to give me peace. Often God doesn't answer your prayer immediately. Well, the problem's gone so there's nothing to be anxious about because God instantly answered my prayer. No, the idea there is you can have peace because you're trusting God to take care of that situation that you're anxious about. Money, that can often be a source of anxiety or relationship problems or health issues.

All of these, anything that we can be tempted to be anxious about, we can turn it into a conversation with God and he promises, I'll give you peace that passes understanding. There's another verse in Philippians I wanted to look at. Actually let's jump over to Ephesians 1:15.

We must learn to pray and to give our problems over to God, so then we can be freed up to walk in God's peace and then we can be effective prayer warriors.

Ephesians 1:15, Now this is Paul praying for the church and you will see Paul prays a lot. I was looking it up, Googling the prayers of Paul, and some people say there's 7, there's 10, there's 5.

There are different places where he's talking about prayer. But this clearly is in Ephesians 1:15 here. It's clearly Paul saying he's praying and then he's telling us what he's praying for. So we can learn a lot from Paul the way he prays because, of course, Paul was a great teacher.

He was a pastor and he, of course, taught the word of God to the people, but he also understood he was limited in the impact he could have. Because you can teach somebody the word of God, but if they're not in a place spiritually where they can receive it, it just goes right over their head. Or the Bible says it's like seed that falls on hard ground.

It's just not going to take root. That person's heart needs to be in the right place. So that's part of our job as spiritual leaders or parents, grandparents, is that you're praying, you're instructing those you minister to from the word of God,



but you're also praying for them, knowing that they need to have a spiritual awakening for the word of God to take root in their hearts.

So Ephesians 1:15 *“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.”* And you'll often see this in Paul's prayers that he prays without ceasing, as it were.

Doesn't mean he was praying every second of every day, but prayer was just an ongoing part of his life. God would bring people to his remembrance and he would pray. And again, Paul was a man who learned to live by the grace of God, by the power of the Spirit. And he was able to operate in this ceaseless, intercessory prayer because he learned to let Christ live his life through him.

So in verse 17, this is now his prayer. He says that *“the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the father of glory may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him.”* Now that's the first prayer request, that God would give to you, *“the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him.”* Because he knows if he's not praying that for the people, he could give them the word of God and they're just thinking about the football game or something.

But have you ever prayed for someone and then you hear them come back and say, I was driving down the street and I just had this encounter with God. It was like, boom, the light went on in my mind and the Lord spoke to me and I was like, yeah, I was praying for you. That's what I'm talking about, where you have that moment. Hopefully you guys have that all the time, right?

You're in prayer, you're in your devotional time and the Lord just speaks to you and you have that beautiful intimacy with God and God just breaking through into your life and speaking into an area and giving you wisdom, giving you revelation of him. This is what we forget sometimes. To be a Christian, It's a supernatural interaction with God.

It's not just religion that we're learning academic things, it's about knowing God. And that's what he says. I pray that God would give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. So that's prayer number one. Number two, *“the eyes of your understanding being enlightened.”*

So again, it's that same idea of Paul understanding that they needed spiritual revelation. One of the prayers of Jesus, he said, Father I thank you that you've hidden these truths from the wise and intelligent and revealed them to babes for

thus it was fitting in your sight. The word of God is hidden from the proud heart, from those who think, oh, I'm so smart.

I don't need to learn anything from God. God says then I'll just hide my wisdom from you. But if you're a babe, if you become as a child before God and say, Lord, I need to learn from you God, I want to hear from you God, then the eyes of your understanding are enlightened. Isn't that beautiful? And then what does Paul want them to see as they gain this knowledge of God as their eyes, spiritual eyes are open, that you may know what is the hope of his calling. So that's one more of his prayers, that people would understand the blessing of being called by God to live for him, to serve him.

This is not only the hope of heaven, but it's a hope that you have purpose in your life. Do you ever feel like, oh, my life doesn't have purpose. That's like the worst feeling you can have. I don't even know what I'm doing. I don't have a purpose, I don't know what God wants me to do.

Which by the way somebody just sent me a text, I think James, about this, where you're struggling to know the will of God. And James was saying, isn't it where you're reading the word of God, and then trying to follow the revealed written will of God first, and then he'll give you direction for your life personally?

I was like, yeah, you got it. Yeah, of course. We were like, what's God's will? Are you going to church? That's literally where I'll start with people. They come to counsel with me and I'm like, what's going on with your spiritual life? Are you even doing the basic things?

Because I'm not going to be able to help you if you're not even reaching out for help from God. So are you going to church? Are you spending time with God? Do you read your Bible? Those are basic things that we're called to do. The Bible says, and so if you want to know what the will of God is, if you feel like you have no purpose, then start with those things and God will then add to that.

He'll begin to give you specifics about your calling and your life. For me, it's always happened in church where God will give me these revelations about what he's calling me to in terms of ministry. I can't go into all that now. But I've shared some of those stories before. So the hope of his calling, what are the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints?

Now that's an unusual verse where Paul is saying I'm praying for you that you will understand how valuable you are to God. That's basically what he's saying.

He says, you are God's inheritance. What? That's kind of a lame inheritance God. Me? No, he bought you with a price. You are the most valuable thing in the universe to him.

You talk about self-esteem. When the light goes on, you realize, oh, God's excited about bringing me to heaven into his family. He's excited about me having a relationship with him. I am his inheritance. When the Holy Spirit opens your eyes and you see this - because otherwise it's just words - but when God shows that to you, you're valuable to me, you're my inheritance, I love you, you're precious to me, those are the kind of things that changes us from the inside out.

And then he says *“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?”*

Paul is praying that people will see what great power is available to them to live this Christian life. Look at the words he used, exceeding greatness of his power. There's a lot of power, he's trying to say, available to us. It's not just power, but it's great power.

It's not just great power. It's exceeding great power toward us who live a really perfect life and never mess up. That's who the power's available to. In fact, somebody told me this once; the Holy Spirit is only for holy people. And I said, oh well, I guess that excludes me. It's like, where did you ever get that idea? Are you kidding me? Do you ever read the Bible? No, the power is available to us who believe. Now I'm not saying Holiness doesn't matter. But it's like thinking that I'm going to achieve a spiritual level of holiness and then God's going to bless me with his great power.

No, it's when I say, Lord, I don't have any holiness, any power in myself. I want that power. In fact, I think that's the miracle of being born again. God puts that new spirit in you and you want to please God all of a sudden. That's what shocked me at age 17, when I accepted Christ, finally quit running.

He put this new spirit in me. I thought, okay, I'm going to be a Christian. I'm thinking about it. Yeah, I'm going to try to be like my brother and my dad and it's going to be hard and I'm not going to be able to have fun anymore and party, but at least I won't go to hell.

That was my idea. Then I actually stepped over the line and said, okay, Lord, come into my life. I was like, wow! He came, the spirit came upon me and I was

like, I didn't expect this and this joy and this power and this cleansing, and this burden was lifted and what I noticed about myself right away, I had this intense desire to please God, which I never cared about before.

Not for a moment. It never entered my mind. In fact, I wanted to get away from Christians, those bright, shiny, smiling Christians. No. And now I'm one of them. And yet when you step over the line and you're part of the kingdom you're not looking from the outside, but you're in it.

You're like, oh, I was lied to. Wow, this is all different than I thought it was going to be. I actually want to read the Bible. I want to pray. I want to be with God's people. I want to learn more. Now, the thing that's taken me over the years to learn, just because you have the desire doesn't mean you know how to be holy or to walk in God's power.

So that's why I always talk about grace. Christian, get under the spout where the glory comes out, get filled, get to the cross, and be filled with his power. Get the exceeding greatness of his power toward us who believe - so it's available to anybody.

Say, Jesus, I'm weak. I don't have power in my life to live this Christian life. Sin is dominating my life. It's destroying me. Lord, I believe what you did on the cross will bring not only cleansing of sin, but power to overcome sin and to see my life now on track with your purposes and your will. And now I'm taking up my cross. I'm following Jesus.

I'm not just being dominated by sin anymore. So that's the power we're talking about here. Not power for some weird charisma power. But it's exceeding great power to us who believe. Now let's read on because he says it's according to the working of his mighty power, which he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead.

See, that's when Paul is always going to point you back to the cross. And I love that because that's where I want to live. Because I'm so weak and sinful in myself. But I know if I'm living in that zone of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and I'm seated with him in heavenly places, it says in other parts of Ephesians, that's where my power is.

That's what I'm believing in. Because when we read that verse, he said the greatness of his power is toward us who believe. What am I believing in? Why I'm believing that God raised Christ from the dead and Christ is seated at the

right hand of God in heavenly places, far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion.

Some people are so obsessed with the devil and the power of the devil. No, we're far above all principality and power, might and dominion. We're standing in victory. And every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the age which is to come, and he put all things under his feet and gave him, Jesus to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

So you can see that if you are a Christ-centered person, you realize, oh, Jesus is the head of the church. Everything's submitted to him. He's the one I'm going to have to answer to. That's where the power is going to come. Now, back to prayer. This is all a prayer. Paul is praying for someone else.

Surely we should be praying this for ourselves. Lord, open my eyes. Lord, give me understanding. Don't just assume you know it all. You don't. There's a lot we don't know about God and who he is, and what he wants to do in my life. That's what I don't want to miss. I don't want to miss what God has for my life.

I don't want to stand before him, and he'll say, yeah well you're saved, but you missed my will. I want to hear, hey, well done, good and faithful servant. What were you serving? I was serving my spouse. I was serving my family. I was serving the church. Whatever God called me to, that's what I'm serving.

But I need this kind of power in my life to do that because we're weak. We need resurrection power. We need this old man to die daily. So that's why we're identifying with the cross. So we're praying this for ourselves, and then we're praying this for other people. That's when we're going to see revival. Paul understood that he had to pray for people.

Now let's jump over to Ephesians 3, just a couple pages over and we're going to see another prayer of Paul's. Ephesians 3:14 – *“For this reason, I bow my knees to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Obviously, he's praying - *“from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named.”*

Now, here's his prayer - *“that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner man.”* Now, do you see a theme here, something that we just read in the other prayer? Paul's praying that if you're going to be a successful Christian, you need to have the exceeding greatness of his power in you.

And now he's saying something very similar. He's saying you need to be strengthened with might through his spirit in the inner man. Don't you want that? I want that power by the spirit with might. It's not just I need a little bit of strength. I need mighty power.

I think one of the problems is we don't even pray this for ourselves and believe that this can happen. We live too often in this state of weakness and defeat. And the Lord is saying, ask me, ask me. I want to give you strength - verse 17; *“that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith.”*

What's he praying there? That the believers he's ministering to, that they will understand.

They need to be focused on Christ into faith. It's that simple. I like to say the Christian life, it's about a simple faith and a great savior. It's just exercising faith in Jesus Christ every day, all day, living your life by faith in Him. That's what Paul's praying, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you may be rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge, and that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

Now, that's just off the charts. I don't even know what to say about that. You can be filled with all the fullness of God and the love of God. So again, I'm praying that for myself. What's the Bible say? Love is not irritable. First Corinthians 13. Do you ever get irritable with people? Are you walking in love?

Sometimes I'm scrolling through Facebook and I'm like, I'm just irritated with that person. You know, they just irritate me, I'm like, that's not right. I'm supposed to love everybody. Pastor gets irritated? Yes, he does. But I know enough to say that's not God.

You should be praying for that person. If for some reason they irritate you, do you think they're the source, or is it me? I'm the problem. Then we get in close quarters with those we love and you can get irritated, but we have to say, Lord, love is not irritable. Fill me with your love, Lord, that I can't even comprehend it.

It's the width, the length, the depth to know the love of Christ, which passes knowledge. Lord, pour out that love. Romans 5 says the love of God has been poured out into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us. It's supernatural. You can't just pump yourself up. I'm going to love everybody.

I'm going to love everybody. Yeah, good luck with that. No, we should say, Lord, fill me with your love. Pour out your Holy Spirit through the cross. I know I don't deserve it. Fill me with so much love that I just want to serve people. I want to give sacrificially to them. It's not about me getting, it's about love is giving to others.

That's what Christ did. Then verse 20, we have to read this now. *“To Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”* So does that not encourage your prayer life?

Jesus said men ought always to pray and not lose heart. Why would he say that? We don't ever lose heart in prayer. We didn't need that exhortation, Lord, because we're always upbeat and believing. No, you start praying about something and it's like I guess God hasn't done anything. He hasn't changed the situation, so I guess I should just stop praying.

You know the parables right? Keep on asking, keep on knocking, and keep on seeking. We're encouraged to keep praying and not be discouraged. Keep praying for that person. Keep praying for that loved one. Keep praying for yourself. Lord, I'm just not changing. Lord, I don't have the power. You really think if you kneel at the cross and say Jesus, fill me with your spirit, and cleanse me from my sin, empower me with your Holy Spirit, Lord, I want to learn to walk in this power. I want to learn to walk in this, you don't think the Lord's going to answer that prayer?

What did Jesus say if you ask him? Look - if a child asks his father for a loaf of bread, is he going to give him a rock?

If he asks him for a fish, is he going to give him a snake? Ha ha, funny joke. Here's your plate of scorpions. He says, if you, being evil know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him. Because he knows why I deserve a snake and a scorpion and all these bad things... But Lord, would you give me the power of your Holy Spirit? Would you change my life?

Can I walk in a new dimension of power that I never imagined possible? See, we just boxed God in. This is how it's always been. So this is how it has to be. And the Lord says, no, there are new things I want to do.

Behold, old things have passed away. New things are coming. That's what we have to believe God for. Lord, we want revival in our lives. We want revival in the lives of our children. I know so many of you here, that you have adult children that won't even talk to you. And we're praying, I hear about that in our prayer meetings.

We're praying for revival and he will do exceedingly, abundantly, above all we ask or think. Okay, so he could just say, God is able to do above all that you ask or think. No. God is able to do abundantly above what you ask or think. No, he's able to do exceedingly, abundantly.

I guess he could have added a few more adverbs. It's like okay Paul, we get it. Paul's trying to express what he'll do if you'll just pray. If you'll just pray, he'll do above, beyond what you can possibly imagine.

What did James say - you have not because you asked not. I heard one pastor say the problem is not unanswered prayer. The problem is unoffered prayer. Okay, we're all guilty. Come on. Come on. May the Lord put a spirit and an anointing.

Don't we pray through the day? That's our calling, that's our main purpose. Things will change guys. But this is what has taken me a long time to learn. I don't have the power in myself to do it. I can put it on my calendar and put it on my alarm clock. That's just the law.

That's great. Have the goal, that's great. But that's not going to make it happen. It's going to be the power of the Holy Spirit. And then what does he say? Who gets the glory? To him be glory in the church by Christ for all generations. So I can't say, well you know, things started changing for me when I started praying three hours a day. I really started seeing breakthroughs.

Now, if y'all could come every day at four o'clock in the morning, we'll meet here at the church. And if you'll do that for a month, 30 days of prayer - you know what I'm saying? And then you don't show up and you think, oh, I'm just not qualified.

That's not what God's looking for. If you want to sign up for 30 days or something and that helps you, do it. But ultimately we need the power of the Holy Spirit, and then he gets the glory. Then I can just say, oh yeah, I have been praying more effectively than I ever imagined possible. But to him be all the glory, because it's his spirit.



Stir it in me. I'm weak as can be, prayer-less as can be in myself. To him be all the glory. Okay, a couple other ones real quick. Colossians 1:9. Now Paul, he's showing us a really important part of his life that he's a prayer warrior.

He says in Colossians 1:9 – *“For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.”* Are you seeing a pattern here? You can't miss it. What should we be praying for?

Oh God, just bless them. Just give them everything they want. What?

No Lord, or worse yet, God bless me. Give me everything I want.

No, shouldn't it be Lord, your will be done, your kingdom come in my life. And yeah, I want blessing. Yeah, I need a new car or I need a new stove or whatever. Ours broke last night, by the way.

Oh, what a weird night. One of my daughters pulled a vinegar bottle out of the shelf, it fell, hit the stove top, which is made out of glass, shattered the whole glass. And then she broke another thing, and then Kelly broke something and I broke a dish and we're like, what is happening here? But it is really weird. We've been cooking a lot more because we're on this new diet. So that's part of the reason. Yeah. Fast food's definitely not in our diet for sure. But how did I get off onto that?

Oh yeah, brokenness, there you go. That's how I got onto it. So it's okay to ask for blessing, right? Of course. God says he knows your needs before you ask him.

But there's also a deeper place of prayer, isn't there? Lord, change me. Give me spiritual understanding and wisdom. I want to walk in the supernatural. I want to walk in your power. I want to be connected to you, and I want to be effective in my prayer life. So Paul is praying that they be filled with the knowledge of his will.

I don't know what God's will is. I don't know. Well pray. God wants us to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing him. This is all a prayer -being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might.

Oh, here we go with this again - strengthened with might according to his glorious power for all patience and long suffering with joy. So isn't that important? Because we face difficulties every day in our life, as if we're surprised by it. Then we get all bent out of shape and impatient.

The Lord says if you're so filled with my spirit and my power, you will have patience and long suffering, even with joy going through the difficulties. Just say, okay, Lord, I count it all joy because I know you're working something. Verse 12, *“giving thanks to the father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.”*

And I could go on, but I just want to give you a flavor of that prayer. Then jump over to Colossians 4:2. Now this is more of an exhortation to pray. Colossians 4:2 – *“Continue earnestly in prayer, being vigilant in it with thanksgiving.”* So you see our calling as Christians - do you see yourself that way?

Like you're an earnest prayer warrior and you're continuing in it? Continue earnestly in prayer. Being vigilant. Do you see yourself as a vigilant, earnest prayer warrior, with thanksgiving? Meanwhile, *“praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in chains, that I may make it manifest, as I ought to speak.”*

So isn't that interesting? Paul's asking for prayer to preach the word, and certainly we should pray that for ourselves, Lord, give us power to take advantage of opportunities, open doors of ministry for us, and that we might speak as we ought to speak the words of Christ.

And then one last verse.

Philippians 1:9 *“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”*

So again, we're praying for people, we're praying for ourselves. We don't have to micromanage other people. We don't have to be the ones who are trying to change them. We can pray, Lord, just open their eyes, and help them to see the things that are excellent. I can see they're involved in things that aren't excellent, aren't the best for their lives.

And Lord that their hearts would just be in a sincere place. And Lord, that they would be without offense till the day of Christ, because the day of Christ is coming and they're going to have to stand before the Lord, and Lord, that they would just be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ.

So righteousness comes by faith in Jesus Christ. And again, who gets the praise? God gets the praise and glory. We're not walking around as self-righteous people. We're saying, wow, any righteousness you see in my life, it's from Jesus Christ as a gift.

One last thing, we can read the news and be distressed by certain things we read or the moral corruption of our country. And the Lord just reminded me that those who are in rebellion to God, overt outward rebellion against his word, they are in danger of the judgment of God. And we are to pray for them.

If you view that person as your enemy or you're angry with them, Jesus said, love your enemy.

Pray for those who persecute you. The Lord was just showing me that the other day, because it can be distressing. You read things and you say, wow, the direction our culture's going. But to say Lord, wow, if that person were to die today I sure don't think they'd go to heaven. In the Bible there's a list that says if you behave in such ways, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven, twice in the New Testament, at least.

So we have to watch our attitudes and be in prayer for those who aren't saved and the danger that they are facing. And I think God would be pleased with that. So let's pray.

Lord, We thank you for the calling to prayer. I just sense your stirring something new for this year, something deeper.

You're calling us to a higher place to put off the old man, and put on the new and to put on our armor, put on Christ Jesus. All these analogies that help us understand what it means to walk in the power of the Spirit, to be prepared for prayer. And Lord, that we can go to battle on our knees, Lord. We can impact this world through prayer, Lord, and we just pray that we would respond to your calling and we would prioritize our time, and Lord, just to pray for revival for ourselves, for others.

And Lord, the promises are many. Lord, just stir our hearts even today to take time away from other things. And Lord, when we fall short, we don't get

condemned. We just call out to you and say, Lord, call me to that place of prayer. Resurrect me, empower me, Holy Spirit. Stir in me, yes, a desire to pray and the power to pray and to pray.

Give me what I should pray for and who I should pray for. All these things, Lord. It's just like when the spirit's moving, all that just seems to flow and it's beautiful. And so we thank you that you don't just stand at a distance and command us to pray, but you come in us and empower us to do it.

It is a mystery, Lord. We don't understand why you don't just do what you want to do, but you use prayer as a tool by your sovereign will. You've decided to involve us in the outworkings of your plan. And so we want to cooperate with that. So Lord, just write this on our hearts this week and we commit this to you.

In Jesus' name, Amen.