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When Gospel Prayers Comes Home
Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21; 6:18-20

How many of you have ever woken up in the middle of the night thinking about another family member? You wake up in the middle of the night and your mind goes to how someone you love in your family is doing. You wake up concerned. You think about their situation in life and maybe some hard things they are going through or whether or not they are saved and your mind starts racing. Has this ever happened to any of you? Maybe a better question is, “When does this not happen to you?” It’s normal to be concerned about people you love and it’s normal for believers to pray for people you love.

Last night I woke up in the middle of the night thinking about one of my daughters. I started thinking about her school situation and how she is doing at school. My mind began to race about some things I perceive that are challenging for her. I had a hard time going back to sleep because my mind wouldn’t slow down. As I laid there I knew something even though it was the middle of the night. I knew that I could take my concerns to God in prayer.

The problem for me a lot of times is knowing what to actually pray for her. I know what I want for her, but so often I find that what I

want for her is not always what God's Word says is best for her. I want her to have friends. I want her to be happy. I want temporal things for her that I think will improve her life. Those things aren't bad or sinful. What's convicting is when I compare the kinds of things I pray for my family to Scripture. I doubt I am alone in this.

Let me ask you - what if you could sit down with someone who saw and spent time with the risen Christ and you could ask that person this question, "What should I be praying for people I love in my family who know Christ? Or, "What should I be praying for people I love who do not know Christ?" This is where Paul's letter to the Ephesians can help us. Paul was an apostle. He saw and spent time with the risen Christ and he wrote Ephesians to show us what he prayed for the church and what he asked the church to pray for him.

The truth is that we can know what Paul prays for believers. His 13 letters recorded for us in the New Testament are filled with prayers. A while back a teacher I love named Alistair Begg wrote a short book called Pray Big: Learn to Pray Like An Apostle. Here is what he writes about Paul's prayers, "**Paul was a great pray-er. He was confident, he was committed, and he was humble and bold and compassionate. He clearly enjoyed prayer, and was excited about it. He expected his Father in heaven to hear what he said and to act in other people's lives accordingly. He prayed and then was "watchful in it with thanksgiving (Colossians 4:2), ready to see how God would**

be pleased to answer his prayers. Paul prayed big prayers because he believed great things. Let's learn from him how we might do the same."

That's our goal tonight. We want to look at Paul's prayers in Ephesians and learn from Paul how to pray a little better for the glory of God. Let me say before we look at Paul's prayers that you don't have to pray these prayers to be pleasing to God. You can pour out your heart to God any way you want. Psalm 62:8, "Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your heart before him; God is a refuge for us." God loves you and He is a good Father who wants us to come to Him and pour out our hearts to Him and find refuge in Him. He wants you to come to Him. He invites you to come to Him.

My concern at least with my own prayers is that they don't always reflect what God's Word says is best for the people of God. I think I know what is best. That is pride. I don't know what is best. God's will is what is good, pleasing and perfect not my will. I think this is another area we can do a little better for the glory of God.

My challenge for you tonight is to consider using Paul's prayers as a guide for the kinds of things you can pray and might not pray. The title for this lesson is When Gospel Prayers Come Home. This is what we see in Ephesians. Paul's prayers for the church and his prayer request of the church connect to the gospel. **The gospel informed Paul's prayers and his prayer request.**

Thinking through these prayers led me back to something I read years ago that really challenged my thinking about the gospel and how the gospel wasn't a message for the apostle Paul - It was the message for the apostle Paul. A pastor named **CJ Mahaney** wrote years ago, **“The cross was the centerpiece of Paul’s theology. It wasn’t merely one of Paul’s messages; it was the message. He taught about other things as well, but whatever he taught was always derived from, and related to, the foundational reality that Jesus Christ died so that sinners would be reconciled to God and forgiven by God.”**

Paul’s prayers in Ephesians connect to the plan of salvation. His prayers are not asking God to give us something new or something more than what we already have in Christ. **God cannot give us anything better than He already gave us in Christ.** What Paul prays for is the power we need to know what we have and to experience it in deeper ways. Notice I said experience. I don’t shy away from that. Don’t you want a deeper experience of what you have in Christ? I do.

Tonight’s class is going to be pretty straightforward - we are going to read two of Paul’s prayers in Ephesians and then we are going to read a prayer request that Paul makes from the Ephesians. We are going to think through how to incorporate Paul’s prayers in Ephesians into how we pray for ourselves and for our family

members. Are you with me? Let's start by reading Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23:

Ephesians 1:15-23

- 15 For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints,
- 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers,
- 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,
- 18 having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints,
- 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might
- 20 that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places,
- 21 far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come.
- 22 And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church,
- 23 which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.

Ephesians 3:14-21

- 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
- 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,

- 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
- 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
- 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
- 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
- 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

Now turn to Ephesians 6:18-20 and notice what Paul asks for prayer for:

- 18 praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,
- 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,
- 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

Well, at the very least I think we can all admit that we don't usually pray this way. Our prayers are pretty pathetic when we compare the kinds of things we pray for and ask other people to pray for us. **We live in the shallow end of the prayer pool and Paul seems to be comfortable in the deep end.** Paul's prayers are a little bit deeper than the kinds of things we pray for. Maybe I am just speaking for myself.

Again, I am not trying to shame your prayer life. I am not trying to bring unnecessary conviction into your life. Not at all. Remember the goal of our mid week classes are really simple - we want to take practical areas of the Christian life and consider what the Bible teaches and how we can do a little better in these areas for the glory of God. Hopefully by reading and reflecting on these prayers we can pray a little better for the glory of God. When we wake up in the middle of the night and find our minds running after concerns for people we love we can think through these prayers and pray these things.

This is the second principle from Ephesians that I think can help us live in our homes a little better for the glory of God. Last weeks principle was that to glorify God in your home you need to stay in awe of your salvation. **This weeks principle is that to glorify God in your home you need to pray gospel centered prayers.** It is very tempting to forget how amazing it is to be saved and to forget that when we pray for one another we need our prayers to be informed by the gospel.

Paul's first prayer in Ephesians is really Ephesians 1:3-14. Praising God is part of prayer. But the first actual request comes in Ephesians 1:17-23. Notice the first three words in Ephesians 1:15, "For this reason." Those three words connect back to Paul's praise to God for the plan of salvation. Notice it doesn't say in verse 15, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in

the Lord Jesus and the love you have for all the saints I pray that God would bless where you live with better weather and a better governor and that God would heal whatever is bothering you physically.” No. Paul doesn’t pray for temporal things. He prays for what’s eternal. He knows what matters most is not things that are passing away but things that are never passing away.

What the gospel produces and what the gospel provides inform Paul’s prayer for people who already know and believe the gospel. I’m not saying it is wrong to pray for physical needs. Jesus taught us to ask God to give us our daily bread. It’s okay to pray for physical needs, but it is not okay to only pray for physical needs.

I remember at a former church I served in there was a pastor who always tried to make the point that Paul never prayed for physical needs. He would always say, “You never see Paul praying for aunt Betty’s hip.” **What I found interesting is that there was a sweet older lady in the church named Betty who had a bad hip.** Every time he would make a reference to not praying for aunt Betty’s hip I wondered what everyone thought about that. It’s not sinful to pray for God to remove physical ailments.

But what I think we see in Paul’s prayers in Ephesians is that what mattered most to Paul was believers growing in their understanding of and appreciation for salvation. Both of Paul’s prayers in Ephesians and his prayer request for the Ephesians

are connected to the gospel. What can we learn from the two prayers Paul prays for believers in Ephesians 1:15-23 and Ephesians 3:14-21 and what Paul asks these believers to pray for him in Ephesians 6:19?

The first point I want you to see from Paul's prayers in Ephesians 1:15-23 and Ephesians 3:14-21 is a simple point but one I think we too often forget when we pray for people we love who know the Lord:

1. Paul didn't leave the gospel out when he prayed for believers

Notice in verse 15 Paul starts by telling them what he is thankful for. Is thanksgiving an important part of prayer? Absolutely! Paul reminds the church what he is thankful for before he asks for God to do something for them. It's good to spend time in prayer expressing gratitude to God before we ask for things. I think it can be hard in prayer to start with gratitude and not immediately ask for things. Notice what Paul is thankful for?

Paul is thankful to God for their faith in the Lord Jesus and their love toward all the saints. Why does Paul thank God for these things? Why doesn't Paul thank the Ephesians for these things? **Because as we keep reading through the letter we are reminded that faith in Christ and love for one another come from God.** They are gifts of His grace. The reason we have faith

in Christ and love for one another is that this is what the gospel produces.

Faith and love come to us from God through the gospel and are produced in our lives by the gospel

Paul gives thanks for something similar in Colossians 1:3-5:

- 3 We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,
- 4 since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love that you have for all the saints,
- 5 because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. Of this you have heard before in the word of the truth, the gospel,

Who do we believe in Jesus and love one another? The gospel. The gospel produces these fruits. Therefore, when we see them in someone else we need to trace them back to the One who produces them in His people and thank Him for it. Paul starts his letter to the Colossians giving thanks for the same things he thanked God for the Ephesians. Notice Paul didn't skip over the basics for a believer when he prayed. He gave thanks for the basics. Why? **The basic things are the main things.**

Do we ever outgrow our need to keep believing in Christ and keep loving all the saints? No. We never outgrow our need to keep believing in Christ and keep growing in our love for all the saints. Paul gave thanks for evidences of grace. Do we? Do these kinds of things inform what we give thanks for?

Notice after Paul gives thanks for them in verses 15-16 he asks God to do something for them in verses 17-23. **Thanksgiving is followed by a continual prayer request.** What did Paul pray for believers? What do believers need most according to someone who saw and spent time with Christ after He rose again and wrote this letter through the superintending power of the Holy Spirit?

What did Paul ask for? You can break this prayer down into two parts:

- a. Paul's **request** for wisdom and revelation - Ephesians 1:16-18a
- b. Paul's **reason** for the request for wisdom and revelation - Ephesians 1:18b-23

Paul asks God to do give people who already knew Him a greater more intimate knowledge of the God they already had come to know. Verse 17, "that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him." Do you know what Paul prayed for people who were saved? He prayed that people who were saved would know the God who saved them better.

That was Paul's number one goal in life. Paul modeled what he prayed for.

Philippians 3:7-11

- 7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.
- 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of *knowing* Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ
- 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith —
- 10 that I may *know* him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,
- 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

What did Paul pray for so that we would know God better? In verse 17 He calls on the Helper, the Holy Spirit. Why? Because this is the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer. He guides us into the truth to know Christ better. That's the ministry of the Spirit. Jesus said it this way in the upper room the night before the cross:

John 16:13-14

- 13** When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come.
- 14** He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.

Notice Jesus didn't pray for the Holy Spirit to guide us apart from the truth but **into all the truth**. We need two things to know God better - The Spirit of God and the Word of God. Because we have those two things we have what we need to know God better.

How can this help us when we wake up in the middle of the night or in the morning and our first thoughts go to believers in our families? What do we do? We can thank God for their faith in Christ and love for all the saints and we can ask God to help them know Him better by His Spirit through His Word. Paul's prayer for them was used on the truths he had just revealed to them.

Then Paul prayed for the enlightenment they needed to know three things God had given them in the gospel:

- The hope to which He has called you
- The riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints
- The greatness of His power toward us who believe

Do we need to know these things to know God better? I think so. Do we forget these things when we pray for one another? I think so.

Robert Gromacki summarizes Paul's prayer this way:

“Paul prayed that his readers might understand what he had just revealed to them. He prayed that God would give them divine enlightenment to perceive three things (indicated by the threefold use of “what”; 1:18 [twice], 19). He wanted them to know the hope of the divine calling, that is, God’s purpose in His choice of them; to know the riches of the glory of God’s inheritance in the saints; and to understand the greatness of God’s power which raised Christ from physical death and effected His ascension. Only after Christ’s death, resurrection, and ascension could He assume the position of the spiritual head of His spiritual body, the Church.” - Robert Gromacki

You can think of these three things this way - The believers needed to know the hope they had in the gospel, the value they received from the gospel and the power that was theirs because of the gospel. They already had these things, but they needed to know what they had. So do we!

How would you use this prayer tonight before you go to bed or in the middle of the night or tomorrow morning? Stay with me here. Do you see all the places in this prayer where Paul uses the words you and you? You see the words you twice in verse 15, you see the word you twice in verse 16, you in the middle of verse 17, your you and you in verse 18, us in verse 19. Whenever Paul uses those words he is thinking about believers in Christ. What does that mean?

Plagiarism is wrong in school but not in the school of prayer.

Just go through this prayer and when you think about another believer put their name where Paul writes your or you or we and use this prayer as a way to pray for that person. I'll take Jim DeCamp for an example.

“Lord, I thank you for Jim’s faith in the Lord Jesus and His love for all the saints. Lord thank you for giving Jim the gift of faith in Christ through the gospel and changing his heart so that He loves your family. I see the difference the gospel has made in Jim’s life and Father I thank you for it. Please keep helping Jim to trust Christ and to love your people more and more.

Lord, would you please help Jim to make it his number one goal in life to know you better. He knows you because You know Him, but I would love to see Him know you better. Holy Spirit, as Jim spends time studying Scripture today would you please open the eyes of His heart to behold your beauty. Help him to know what He has in Christ - He has hope in Christ. He is valued as your inheritance and He has the power of Christ working for Him today. Nothing can separate Jim from your love, Lord. Help him to see that Christ has power over everything as a result of the resurrection and Christ rules over everything for the sake of His church.”

I don't think that is super complicated. It takes a little bit of work, but it's not hard work. **And the more you pray this way the more the truth sticks to your soul.**

So, in Ephesians 1:15-23 After praising God for his blessings, Paul asks for spiritual wisdom to comprehend those blessings. He prays that the Spirit would help believers understand what God has done for them in Christ. As the Spirit enlightens our hearts, we come to know the hope of God's calling, the glory of God's inheritance, and the greatness of God's power. Then we see in his prayer how God supremely displayed his power in Jesus when he raised him from the dead, exalted him to the place of honor and authority, subjected all powers to his reign, and gave him as head over all things to the church.

I think all of us could benefit from studying this prayer and using it in how we pray for our believing family members.

Now turn to Ephesians 3:14-21.

At the end of Paul's prayer in Ephesians 1:15-23 he prayed for believers to understand the power of Christ over all things for the sake of His church. He prays we would know the power of Christ for us. **Now he prays that we would know the power of Christ's love in us.**

One interesting thing is where this prayer is placed in the letter. This prayer comes between the doctrinal part of Ephesians and the devotion part of Ephesians. Before Paul tells us how to walk worthy of our calling he stops and he gets down on his knees and he makes another prayer request. Notice again what Paul asks God to do.

Paul ends the doctrinal section of Ephesians with the following prayer in Ephesians 3:14-21:

- 14 For this reason I bow my knees before the Father,
- 15 from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named,
- 16 that according to the riches of his glory he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being,
- 17 so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love,
- 18 may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth,
- 19 and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.
- 20 Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
- 21 to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

What did Paul know? Why does he tell them that he gets down on his knees to pray for them? Think back on your prayer life. When do you bow to pray? **When do you get down on your**

knees? I think we get on our knees when we are aware of our need for God the most. Paul is aware of who he is praying to and the necessity of what he is praying for.

Paul's first prayer is for empowerment. This prayer is for enablement. Paul wants them to live what they've learned. He wants this church to reflect the character of God in the wicked city of Ephesus. He knows unity in the church between Jews and Gentiles is impossible without God working in their hearts. So he gets down on his knees and he prays to the Father who made everything including every family.

Notice in verse 16 Paul prays according to the riches of God's glory. According to means in accordance with. **Paul knows God is infinitely glorious and has unlimited resources to meet the needs of His people.** It is out of the riches of the gospel that Paul asks God to strengthen His people with who at the end of verse 16 and where at the end of verse 16? "He may grant you to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in your inner being." Notice God is the strengthener of His people and the Holy Spirit is the agent of the strengthening.

Something I would encourage you to do is to read through or listen slowly through Ephesians and make a note of all the times Paul refers to God the Holy Spirit. He shows up a lot in Ephesians. Ephesians is about God's glory being revealed in the church and the Holy Spirit is essential in what God is doing. And

yet how often do we forget to include the Holy Spirit in our prayers?

James Rosscup, “Paul is aware that a conferral that grants such sufficiency of power is “through means of”, that is, by the agency of “His Spirit.” The Father’s Spirit is the member of the Godhead that Jesus said He would pray the Father to send to believers (John 14:16), the Person whom He was assured the Father would send (v. 26). He is the Spirit the Father sent according to His own promise (Joel 2:28ff.; Acts 2:33), the Spirit of promise in Eph. 1:13. He is a Person, One who can be grieved by sin (4:30). As He empowered believers in Acts 1:8, 2:4, 4:8 and 4:29–31, Paul has known His supply of power (Rom. 15:13). He also knows Him as the Spirit who produces the aspects of His fruit in believers (Gal. 5:22–23; Eph. 5:9, 18–21).”

Can I ask you something? Are you aware of how much you need the help of the Holy Spirit to glorify God? You need Him to constantly strengthen you to live for Christ. So do your family members who know the Lord. We need to pray more for the Holy Spirit to strengthen the hearts of people we love who know the Lord.

What’s the purpose of the strengthening? Look at verses 17-19, “so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith—that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses

knowledge.” The ministry of the Spirit of God is to take the love of Christ and pour it into our hearts. There’s no jealousy in the Trinity. The Spirit loves to magnify the work of the Son.

Back to Rosscup, “The Spirit’s strengthening in its essence will be for Christ to dwell in saints’ hearts through faith, for Christ to live in them (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:19–20; Col. 3:4). In one sense, Christ already indwells all believers from the time they first received Him (cf. Rom. 8:9; Col. 1:29). But a practical, functional realizing of what that can mean is in view in Ephesians 3:17. The word for “dwell,” *katoikeo*, fuses two words, “dwell” as in a house,” and the prefix *kata*, “down, deep.” It evidently here signifies to “dwell in an intensive effectiveness,” “really live as one at home,” or “have the mastery of the house.” Christ is vitally living within (Gal. 2:20), in the reality that His indwelling prepares Him to be in control. This is analogous to being sons of God and then really living as sons (Matt. 5:46), being sons of light and acting like sons of light (Eph. 5:8–9), and being God’s sons and daughters, separated from worldly things to live for godly values in the family, in the practical fulfillment of this (2 Cor. 6:14–18).”

When the Spirit strengthens us, the love of Christ is known in deeper ways. Can Christ love us more than He does? No. His love is perfect love. Does every believer understand and appreciate and experience the love of Christ the same way? No. Some believers really struggle to know the love of Christ. Paul wants the Spirit to change that. **“Only when the Spirit**

strengthens and Christ lives at home in the life can believers have the ability to perceive the vastness of God's love.”

Okay, I am thankful for how well you are listening. We are almost done. Does this mean we just pray these things for people and they automatically happen? No. God works these things into the hearts of His people through faith and that faith comes from God through His Word. The word does the work. Believers are strengthened by the Spirit through the word of Christ. That is why we need to be praying for one another and pointing one another to the gospel because God uses the gospel to change us and to keep changing us.

What happens as this prayer is answered?

Ephesians 3:20-21

- 20** Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us,
- 21** to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

As believers are filled with God's fullness produced by the Spirit through the Word, God is glorified in His church. This is a pretty awesome thing when you think about it. Where is God's glory put on display today? In the church. We get to be a part of what God is doing to put His glory on display in this broken world. That's amazing. For God to get the glory He deserves we need His help every day.

This would be something we could pray a little more often for people we love who know Christ. Lord, help them to make a difference in the local church for your glory. Help them see your plan to reveal your glory in the church. Help them see what the church is for and help them make a healthy contribution to it, not for their glory, but for your glory. **Most believers do not comprehend how amazing it is to be saved and how amazing it is to be a part of the church that God is using to put His glory on display.** Pray this for them.

The first point tonight is a simple one we tend to forget - when we pray for other family members who know Christ we don't leave the gospel out, we bring the gospel with us. That is one way we glorify God in how we pray for believers in our families.

What about unbelievers? How do we pray for unbelieving family members?

2. We pray for boldness and clarity to make the gospel known and we pray for the Holy Spirit to open their hearts to the glory of Christ

Paul has been praying for these people. At the end of Ephesians he asks them to pray for him. What does he want them to pray for him?

Ephesians 6:18-20

- 18** praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,
- 19** and also for me, **that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel,**
- 20** for which I am an ambassador in chains, **that I may declare it boldly,** as I ought to speak.

Paul wasn't too proud to ask for prayer. He knew that he needed God's help to do what God called him to do. He asks them to pray for him that he would keep proclaiming the gospel with boldness and clarity. In Acts we see Paul testifying before some really important people from a worldly perspective - Kings and emperors. He was sent by Christ to explain to such people who Jesus is and who the church belongs to. He was sent to explain the Christian faith to people who didn't get it. He needed help to do it clearly and boldly as he ought to.

If Paul asks for prayer for such things, I think we need to pray for such things and to pray this for one another. Some of you have unbelieving family members who are very antagonistic to the things of Christ. You need help to explain the gospel to them the right way. You need the same boldness and clarity.

Remember heaven rejoices when sinners hear the gospel and repent. Thus we must pray that the gospel be proclaimed with boldness and clarity.

One of the things we see in church history is mother's praying for their sons a lot prior to the gospel changing the hearts of people God used mightily for the gospel. One such man was Charles Spurgeon. He was a teenager when he came to know the Lord and his mom who prayed for him growing up saw the difference in her son when the Lord answered her prayers.

Spurgeon remembers it this way, "I remember standing before the fire, leaning on the mantel shelf, after I got home, and my mother spoke to me, and I heard her say outside the door, "There is a change come over Charles." She had not had half-a-dozen words with me; but she saw that I was not what I had been. I had been dull, melancholic, sorrowful, depressed; and when I had looked to Christ, the appearance of my face changed; I had a smile, a cheerful, happy, contented look at once, and she could see it; and a few words let her know that her melancholic boy had risen out of his despondency, and had become bright and cheerful."

Until her death 38 years later she was to see that happy transformation sustained in her first-born child. That night he waited for the other children to go to bed before confiding with his father what had happened. By the middle of February (six weeks later) he was calling once a week with a tract at 33 homes.

If you have unbelieving family members don't stop praying for them.

I hope tonight has been encouraging and challenging. I hope the next time you wake up in the middle of the night thinking about someone you love who knows the Lord some of the things we learned from Ephesians 1:15-23 and Ephesians 3:14-21 would come into your mind to pray for them. If you need to look at the verses on your phone that's ok. I hope when you think about unbelieving family members you remember to ask God for clarity and boldness to make the gospel known.

We glorify God when we keep the gospel central in our prayers and ask for boldness and clarity to make it known as we should. Let's pray.