

**Ephesians**  
**How to Pray for This Church (Part 1)**  
**Ephesians 3:14-21**  
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Well, I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Ephesians 3 – I have missed our studies together in this great letter of the apostle to the church in Ephesus, and it's a joy to return there this morning, and to return to one of the great high points in all of the New Testament. One night, while our group was in Israel, we had the privilege of taking a night tour of the city of Jerusalem – if you've ever had that opportunity, you know how beautiful that city can be at night, while the lights reflecting off of the stones; in some cases, 2,000-year-old stones, and it gives it a brilliant gold hue; it's just spectacular at night. But my favorite part of that night tour was a stop at the Western Wall – perhaps you've heard of the Western Wall, but wondered, what does that mean?

Just to give you some context, in the twenty years or so before Christ, Herod the Great completely renovated the temple that the children of Israel had built after they returned from the Babylonian captivity some 400 years before – and when I say completely renovated, in one sense he almost made it new, because he more than doubled the size of the temple courts. That wasn't an easy thing for Herod to do because Jerusalem is composed of a series of hills. So, the only way that he could enlarge the temple area was to create a huge artificial hill, or platform – that platform is called the temple mount; it is nothing more than an artificial platform, or hill, built over one of the hills of Jerusalem, Mount Moriah. It was a flat area of about 36 acres, a huge area, could hold hundreds of thousands of people – and to make that a reality, it required building this huge retaining wall on which the platform rests. All that's left – all that remains of Herod's temple – is part of that retaining wall. The temple is gone; everything that was on top is scraped clean. The platform was scraped clean, and now, where the Holy of Holies stood stands a shrine to the pagan god Allah. The Muslims control the top of the temple mount, but there is still a portion of the retaining wall of that great platform of the temple mount that remains. The most famous original section of that retaining wall is on the western side; it's called the Western Wall, or more commonly, it's called the Wailing Wall. It's where Jewish people go to pray – for most Jews, it's the closest that they can get to their temple, is that retaining wall that was part of

that platform or artificial stage that Herod built. Day and night, if you visit there, you'll see the Jewish men on one side and the Jewish women on the other, praying to the God of Israel, praying for the restoration of the temple, praying for their family and friends – even if you've never been there, you've undoubtedly seen the images of the Jewish people swaying back and forth, pouring out their hearts to the God of Israel in prayer. Sadly, they have not embraced their Messiah – they have not embraced God's Son, and so they stand distant from God. But they are committed as a people – and I'm always reminded of this – they are committed, as a people, to prayer. The lowest stones there on the Wailing Wall or the Western Wall are from the time of Herod the Great, and if you get close enough, you'll see not only the people crowded around there, but you'll see that the cracks between those great stones are filled with little scraps of paper. On each piece of paper, someone has scribbled a prayer, and then shoved that paper into a crevice in the wall, hoping that the physical presence of that prayer will be a reminder to the God of Israel of what they've prayed – prayer is absolutely crucial to the Jewish culture. And, as I was there that evening – as I was thinking, even about this passage, and looking forward to coming back and preaching to you – I was reminded that, folks, prayer should not be less important to us as Christians. It should be more important, because, as Paul has told us in this third chapter and in verse 12, we now, as God's children in Christ, have free access to God. Unlike in Old Testament times, unlike in the times of the temple when there was pictured that distance that had not yet been purchased by Christ, we have access.

Today, in our study of Paul's letter to the Ephesians, we come to Paul's prayer – we come to what may be his greatest recorded prayer, as he pours out his heart, taking advantage of that access he has just described. Let me read it for you in Ephesians 3:14.

For this reason I bow my knees before the Father; from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; and that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled up to all the fullness of

God. Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.

This is Paul's prayer for the church in Ephesus and the churches that surrounded the church there in Ephesus. Prayer was such a crucial part of Paul's life – if you go to the beginning of each of his epistles, you will find him mentioning the fact that he prays regularly for those people – daily, in some cases, he mentions. And several of the prayers that Paul prayed are recorded for us on the pages of scripture – there's one in Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-14 – those are a couple of examples, but here in Ephesians, two of Paul's prayers, two examples of what and how he prayed are preserved for us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. We've already studied Paul's first prayer for the Ephesians; it was in chapter 1 verses 15-23 – it was a prayer for illumination, a prayer that God would open up their minds to really get it, to understand what was theirs in Christ. Here, we come to the second of those great prayers recorded in Ephesians, and this one is strategic – it's strategic because it is the hinge between the first three chapters of doctrine and the final three chapters of practical application. So, you have this hinge, this prayer that swings us from the great truths and doctrine we've learned, to how that should reflect itself in our daily lives – but what makes this prayer unique isn't its placement; it is the majesty and eloquence and power of its expression, the passion and pathos that permeate every word of Paul's prayer.

Charles Simeon, the father of the evangelical movement in England, called this prayer the "four magnitudes" after those expressions – breadth, length, height, and depth – and he made it the foundation of his life and ministry. As you know, one of my great mentors, whom I have never met, is Martyn Lloyd-Jones. And Dr. Jones, or the doctor, as they called him, preached seventeen sermons on these eight verses. For the record, I think I can do it in fewer; I think ten will probably be enough – no, I'm just kidding. Listen to how Lloyd-Jones described this prayer – he said:

However long you may live in this world, whatever orator may arise, you will never hear anything equal for eloquence, for elevation of thought, for profundity

of language. It is undoubtedly one of the great mountain peaks in the scripture. Indeed, there are many who would say that this is the highest peak of all in the entire glorious range of scripture truth and divine revelation.

And that wouldn't be far from the truth. What we have in this prayer is an unprecedented glimpse into the prayer life of this extraordinary apostle and Christian – but more than giving us a glimpse of Paul's prayers, it provides a model for our own. One of the disciples asked Jesus, "Lord, teach us to pray." And out of that, of course, came what we call the Lord's Prayer; really the disciple's prayer, intended for us.

In a very real sense, this prayer of Paul's also serves as a model for our prayers. Now, this prayer has a basic structure to it – in verses 14-15, we could call it an introduction and address of God; he's just getting started, as it were. In verses 16-19, he sets forth three great requests, which we'll look at together next week. And then the last two verses, verses 20-21 are a doxology; an expression of praise to God – and that doxology serves as a conclusion, not only to Paul's prayer, but to the first half of the letter. That's the basic structure – but we're not going to follow that basic structure per se. Instead, what I want us to do is I want us to look at this prayer as a model; I want us to look at it as a way to learn how to mimic the apostle Paul in our prayers, to learn how to pray for ourselves and how to pray for the church, because in this prayer, we will discover the foundational principles of effective prayer for the church – for this church.

The first principle of effective prayer that I want us to see together this morning is this – pray according to revelation. Pray according to revelation. Notice how he begins in verse 14 – "for this reason." For this reason. Now, that phrase points back up to verse 1 of chapter 3 – there, you remember, Paul began to pray for the church, but as he began to pray, he interrupted himself. Look at verse 1. "For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of you Gentiles – " and he starts to pray, and then you'll notice the verse ends with a dash because the translators have picked up on the fact that Paul interrupts himself; and beginning at verse 2 and running all the way down through verse 13, you have that interruption. It's really a digression, as Paul digresses about his ministry that's been given to him by God, especially about the fact that God has revealed to Paul His great secret plan, and Paul gets to tell it to us. But now, in

verse 14, Paul comes back to the prayer that he began back up in verse 1; he finally returns to his prayer. So, when he says, "for this reason," he's describing what has prompted him to pray, and that's two-fold – there are two great spiritual realities that he's mentioned here, that have prompted his prayer. The first one is the end of chapter 2, where he begins his prayer – in chapter 3, verse 1, he's referring back to what he had just taught them, that both Jews and Gentiles have peace with God and peace with each other through the work of Jesus Christ – that was a great spiritual reality that prompted Paul to pray, and he begins in verse 1 of chapter 3. But then, he interrupts himself, and the interruption also provides a reason for Paul's prayer – here's the second great spiritual reality, and that's that he himself has been given the stewardship of explaining God's great secret about the church to the Gentiles; that's chapter 3, verses 2-13. So, when Paul says, "for this reason," he was referring to what God had revealed to him, and in turn he has explained to us and to the Ephesians. So, in the end, let's put it like this – what prompted Paul to pray was God's revelation; for us, that's the Bible.

Now, this is very instructive and very helpful, because let me ask you a question; when you pray (and I hope you pray) but when you pray, what most often prompts you to pray? If you're like most people, it's your circumstances, it's the things you're facing – and there's nothing wrong with that; in fact, that's a very common familiar Biblical reason to pray. You trace throughout the scripture, you'll find examples of people who, because of the circumstances in which they find themselves, they begin to pray. Let me just give you a couple of examples – turn back to Nehemiah. And Nehemiah begins this way – you remember the story, that he's there in Babylon, and one of his brothers and some men come back from Israel, back from his homeland, and he finds out that things are not well, Nehemiah 1:3, that the wall "is broken down and its gates are burned with fire;" there's distress. Verse 4: "When I heard these words, I sat down and wept and mourned for days; and I was fasting and praying before the God of heaven." You see, his circumstances chased him to prayer, drove him to prayer – you see the same thing over just a couple of chapters in a different circumstance. Nehemiah 4:7 – it's opposition this time when he gets back to Jerusalem; he begins to rebuild. "Now when Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repair of the walls of Jerusalem went on, and that the breaches began to be closed, they were very angry." They "conspired together to come and fight" us. Verse 9: "But we prayed to our God." How often have your circumstances chased

you to God in prayer? You find yourself in a situation you cannot handle, and you cry out to God – that's very common. A couple of other quick examples: in Isaiah, Isaiah's prophecy, you see the same thing in the life of Hezekiah, the righteous king of Judah. Isaiah 37 – you remember, when Assyria comes up to attack and Hezekiah gets the letter describing the attack or describing the ultimatum to surrender. And in Isaiah 37:14, Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers, he read it, and he went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord, and Hezekiah prayed to the Lord, driven by circumstances to prayer. Over in Isaiah 38 it gets much more personal – you remember Hezekiah gets sick, mortally sick, and Isaiah comes to Hezekiah, and he says, listen, "set your house in order," you're going to die. How do you respond to that? You get the message – you have terminal illness; you're going to die. Well, he does what all of us would do – verse 2, "Then Hezekiah turned his face to the wall, and he prayed to the Lord." You see, our circumstances often drive us to God in prayer, and God intended for it to be that way.

But it's also common in scripture, and not quite so common in our lives, for Christians, and the people of God, to be driven to God in prayer not by their circumstances but by God's revelation, by what they understand or don't understand from the scripture, in response to God's word. I won't have you turn there, but probably the classic example of this is the longest chapter in your Bible, Psalm 119. Psalm 119, the longest Psalm, the longest chapter in the Bible, is all about a man praying to God, and what causes him to pray? The word of God. He sees the word of God, and first of all, he wants to understand it better – remember what he says? He says, God, "open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your law" – I don't get it, I don't understand it, help me see. I find myself, as sort of a common practice when I'm setting myself aside to study, and even on other days when I'm, just for my own personal benefit, studying, I find myself reciting the words of the catechism that says, Lord, I am ignorant and in need of a teacher – teach me, help me to understand, help me to get it. The word of God drives us to that, but not only to that; it also drives us to pray, God, help me to do it. And much of Psalm 119 is about, God, help me to walk in Your ways – I get it now, I understand it, but I want to do it. Give me the strength, give me the resolve, give me the courage. And so, the word of God – the truth it presents – drives us to God in prayer, and that was God's intention.

Let me give you an example of this from the Old Testament – turn to Daniel’s prophecy, the book of Daniel. I think one of the most beautiful prayers in all of the Bible comes from a response to God’s revelation. Daniel 9 – I don’t have time to take you through this prayer, but I really encourage you to read it sometime; it’s beautifully, profoundly put – an expression of the heart of Daniel on behalf of the people of God. But notice Daniel 9:1:

In the first year of Darius the son of Ahasuerus, of Median descent, who was made king over the kingdom of the Chaldeans – in the first year of his reign (now watch this), I, Daniel, observed in the books the number of the years which was revealed as the word of the Lord to Jeremiah the prophet for the completion of the desolations of Jerusalem, namely seventy years.

In other words, here’s what he’s saying – he’s saying, at this particular point in history, the first year of Darius, I saw in the prophet Jeremiah, I was reading the prophecy of Jeremiah, and I saw the truth there that was prophesied by Jeremiah, that the people of God would only be captive for seventy years. And when I saw that, verse 3, "So I gave my attention to the Lord God to seek Him by prayer and supplications, with fasting, sackcloth and ashes. I prayed to the Lord my God," and then you have the prayer unfolding – but it was in response to what he read and understood from the Bible that drove him to prayer.

The same thing is what happens to Paul in Ephesians 3 – in Ephesians 3, as he teaches them those profound truths we have learned together, he is driven to prayer. He says, "For this reason," because of these great truths I’ve just told you about, I’m driven to prayer. Let me urge you that, when you read the scripture, when you study the Bible, take what you learn and turn it into a response to God – turn it into a prayer to God. I think Don Whitney is right; the reason so many Christians don’t pray is that they run out of things to say, and they grow tired of using the same repetitious phrases they always use. Listen, instead of pulling out the same old phrases you normally use, let the scripture you just read, in your time in the Word, serve as the outline and guide for turning your prayers back to God. The scripture readings that we have on Sunday morning – that’s my desire, is to basically take that scripture we’ve read, and turn it into an expression of prayer, on my behalf and the behalf of all of us, to God. Let the scripture frame

the content of your prayers, and let it frame even the framework, the structure of your prayers – that’s what Paul did so often; that’s what he’s doing here. He is driven to this prayer by what he discovered from God – in his case, it was revealed directly to him; in ours, it is provided for us in the Word of God. Let the content of the scripture be what you use to express yourself to God. The first great principle of praying for the church is to pray according to revelation – don’t just be driven by your circumstances; nothing wrong with that, but also let the scripture drive you to God.

The second principle that we need to see here, in this model of the apostle Paul’s, is we ought to pray with humility – we ought to pray with humility. Verse 14: "For this reason, I bow my knees." Now, first of all, note that this is clearly a figure of speech, called a metonymy, in which part of something stands for the whole – when Paul says that he bows his knees, he doesn’t mean that’s all he does; that’s shorthand for "I pray," and as part of this prayer, I bow my knees – but this is really quite an unusual way for Paul to refer to prayer. Although bowing on the knees has become a common position for Christians to pray, that was not always true – the most common posture of prayer throughout the scripture, Old Testament and New Testament, was standing, usually with the hands lifted up high to heaven. Let me show you an example of it – turn to Mark 11. Here, our Lord assumes this is how we will pray. Mark 11:24 – He says, "Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they will be granted you." So, when you’re praying, have faith in God, believe God can do what you’re asking – that doesn’t mean He’s going to do everything, but have confidence that He is able to; don’t doubt God. Notice what He says in verse 25 – "Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father who is in heaven will also forgive you for your transgressions." In other words, He’s assuming that when we pray, we will what? Stand. "When you stand praying." The same thing is true in Jesus’ life – Jesus often prayed looking up into heaven, standing and looking up. In Matthew 14:19 you see an example of this – this is the feeding of the five thousand, and verse 19, He orders the people to sit down; so, Jesus is still standing. "He took the five loaves and the two fish, and looking up toward heaven, He blessed the food, and breaking the loaves He gave them to the disciples, and the disciples gave them to the crowds, and they all ate and were satisfied." You see the same thing in a number of places in the gospels, Jesus standing and looking up to pray.



But on occasions in the Bible, while standing was the most common posture in prayer, on certain occasions people would kneel – usually they were distraught occasions, or special occasions. For example, in 1 Kings 8, Solomon, at the dedication of the temple – you remember, we’re told that he went up on the platform he made, and he knelt, lifted his hands toward heaven, and prayed that magnificent prayer that’s recorded for us there in Kings, and again in Chronicles. Daniel, because he was in exile, the people of God were removed from their place – we’re told that, three times a day, he went up and faced toward his homeland and knelt and prayed. In Acts 7, Stephen, at his stoning, the first Christian martyr, as he’s about to be stoned, he kneels and prays to God. Paul, in his farewell prayer to the Ephesian elders, when he knows he’s not going to see them anymore again, knelt and prayed with them in Acts 20. And Jesus, in the garden of Gethsemane, we’re told, in Luke 22, that He knelt, and Matthew adds that He fell on His face; that is, He prostrated Himself with His face toward the ground. J. Oswald Sanders makes this observation in his book on spiritual leadership: "If the Son of God got down upon His knees, yes, upon His face before God, what attitude should we ordinary mortals assume, as we go into His presence? Posture is not everything, but it is something."

The word for kneeling here, back in Ephesians 3, the word for bowing on his knees is a very interesting word – it’s only used four times in the New Testament. Two of those four times, it clearly refers to one Old Testament passage, and I believe it’s the passage Paul intends here as well. Turn back to Isaiah 45 – two of the four times this word occurs in the New Testament, it’s quoting this passage, Isaiah 45:22; you remember this great invitation for all the nations to turn to the God of Israel for salvation. "Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth, for I am God, and there is no other." And then he says this, verse 23 of Isaiah 45: "I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness, and will not turn back, that to Me every knee (here’s our word) will bow, and every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, 'only in the Lord (in Yahweh) are righteousness and strength.'" Now, what’s going on here? The picture here, of bowing the knee, is a sign of homage to the King, a sign of respect and fear of the King – in this case, the sovereign King of the universe. God says every knee will bow to Me as the sovereign of the universe – as they do to their earthly kings, so they will to Me. So, bending the knee, then, was meant to convey the idea of submission to a subject before his

sovereign. Peter O'Brien, in his commentary, writes, "kneeling signified great reverence and submission, especially marking the humble approach of the worshipper who felt his need so keenly that he could not stand upright." So, when Paul says, then, in Ephesians 3, that he bows his knees in prayer, he's referring back to this passage – he's using the imagery of this passage, and he's saying, I have this attitude of humility and submission before my King. It doesn't mean that Paul knelt every time he prayed – we're talking about an attitude of submission to the King.

During the 1770s and the American Revolution, there were signs all over the city of Boston – in fact, signs literally lined the streets of Boston that read like this: "We serve no sovereign here." We serve no sovereign here – obviously, they were intended as an attack on the King of England, but tragically, there are many churches, and I think many Christians, who have unwittingly embraced that frightening slogan for themselves, because they have no authentic reverence or fear of God, no sense of awe, and no willingness to bow their knees before Him and acknowledge His sovereign power – because many Christians don't want a sovereign God who does whatever He pleases; they want a genie god who will serve them and do whatever they please. Brothers and sisters, don't make that tragic error. It's true; Ephesians 3:12 says we, as the children of God, have freedom of access to God, and we have the freedom of speech to bare our hearts before Him – and those are wonderful truths, but what we must not do is become too familiar with God or take God lightly. He is the awesome God of the universe; He is the King. Some Christians think it's kind of cool, it's a sign that they know God particularly well, to speak to Him and treat Him as if He were their "homeboy" – it would be the height of arrogance to think that we know God better than Paul did. When Paul came before God, even though God was his Father, he came on his knees as a sign of homage and submission, and honor and respect, and awe. I'm not saying you always have to kneel, just as Paul didn't always kneel, or Christ didn't always kneel – we're talking about an attitude.

In our trip to Israel, one day we left Israel and went into the Palestinian Authority, into the city of Bethlehem, because we wanted to see the Church of the Nativity. Several very interesting things happened there, which you'll hear about at some point, I'm sure, but we visited the Church of the Nativity. This church was originally built by Constantine's mother, Helena, in the 300's A.D. For hundreds of years, the door of that church, of the Holy Nativity, as it's called, was a grand

high door – but during the times of the crusades, soldiers from both sides would actually ride into the Church of the Nativity on their horses because the door was so high that it permitted it. And so, the crusaders filled in that cavernous door and replaced it with a little tiny door – and today, if you enter the church as we did, you can't stand up and get into the church; you have to crouch down to get in. It was intended to be a powerful lesson to all who would come to the birthplace of Christ, that you can only approach the King in a spirit of humility, bowing before Him. And when you and I come before God in prayer, it should be in that same spirit – the spirit of humility and submission before our King.

There's a third principle of praying for the church here, and I want to look at it just very briefly – it's pray according to God's character. Pray according to God's character. In this brief introduction to his prayer, Paul opens up his soul and allows us to see how he thought of God, how he approached God, and he did so in keeping with his view of God, his perception of God. And if you and I would pray as Paul prayed, we have to come to God in the same way – we must approach Him embracing these same realities about who He is. In just these couple of verses here in Ephesians 3, Paul alludes to several attributes of God that were the foundation of his prayer; not only of this prayer, but of all his prayers, and, I think, of his whole perception of God. I'm not going to spend much time on these; I'm really just going to give them to you, but I hope you'll meditate on them, because this is the bedrock for prayer – this is how you have to think of God, to pray like Paul prayed. The first attribute of God's character that shaped Paul's prayers was the greatness of God. Verse 14, he says, "I bow my knees" – as we've already seen, this phrase is a picture of a subject bowing before his king; it's meant to give us a reminder of our smallness and God's greatness. Jesus taught us to pray "our Father," but then He added the solemn reminder, "who is in heaven." That's how we should think of God – the One we approach is Lord of heaven and earth, and we must remember that. John Bunyan wrote, "The presence of a king is dreadful to his subjects, even if he carries himself ever so condescendingly. If then, there is so much glory and dread in the presence of an earthly king, what fear and dread must there be in the presence of an eternal God?" When we come before God, we must remember His greatness.

Secondly, another attribute that shaped Paul's prayers was the love of God as a Father. The love of God as a Father. Verse 14 says, "I bow before the Father." Folks, it's true that God is our King, but by a sovereign act of grace and love, He has also become our Father. You know, this idea of God as a Father – it was known in the Old Testament times, but it was very uncommon. Just to give you a snapshot of that, the Hebrew word for father occurs almost 1,500 times in the Old Testament – only 15 times is it used with reference to God. By contrast, in the New Testament, the Greek word for father occurs 413 times, and almost 60 percent of those times, it's in reference to our relationship to God. We were enemies of God, alienated from Him, but as Ephesians 1:5 says, God predestined in eternity past to adopt us as His children, and that's how we have become His children – and now, when we come to God in prayer, we not only come to Him as King, but we come to Him as our Father, and as a Father who loves us with an eternal love. That's how we can pray to God – He is great, but He is also Father.

Thirdly, Paul prayed according to the power of God – verse 15 describes Him as the Father "from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name." In the Greek text, there's a play on words here – Paul prays to the "Patera" from whom every "patria" derives its name. The expression doesn't translate into English very well, but probably, in the context, what Paul means is this: He has just talked about the fact that Jews and Gentiles approach God together as a Father – chapter 2, verse 18. They come from different backgrounds; different families, if you will. And so, Paul here is saying that all of the different family groupings of Christians, whether Jews or Gentiles, rich or poor, male or female, whether those in heaven or those still on the earth – all Christians derive their name, their existence, their character, from the same Father – the same Being who sovereignly rules over heaven and earth. It points to God as our powerful Father, ruling over heaven and earth.

Paul's prayer was also driven by the goodness and generosity of God. Verse 16 says, "that He would grant you;" that He would give you – Paul understands God to be one who, by nature, gives. Sheila and I have a relative who is generous to a fault – he helped us as Sheila's dad was dying, and so we gave him Sheila's dad's new Crown Victoria, or nearly new Crown Victoria, as a gift, because he really didn't have a good working car of his own. But we found out, a few months later, that he'd already given it away to someone he thought was in more need than he

was. He's given away more things than I've ever had, because he is inherently generous – that's how Paul knew God was; God is inherently generous. Acts 14, He gave us "rains... and fruitful seasons;" He satisfied us with "food and gladness." 1 Timothy 6 – He's the one who gives us all things richly to enjoy. Matthew 7, our Lord says, listen, if you're wicked people and you "give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father" give good gifts to His children? Paul understood that God was inherently generous, and he prayed with that in mind. He expected not what he prayed for; he didn't always think he would get what he prayed for – there are instances in the scripture where he didn't – but he always knew God would be good and generous, and that was the foundation for his prayer.

There's one more attribute of God that permeated Paul's thinking and left a mark on his prayers – it was the glory of God. Verse 16 says that He will grant you, or give to you, "according to the riches of His glory;" in other words, may God give you what I'm asking for, on a scale commensurate with His own being – commensurate with the weight of His own being. The bottom line is, Paul expected God to overwhelm these people with the spiritual resources for which he was praying – God never has any shortages; the stock markets of heaven never have a sell-off; there are never down-turns, never recessions, no inflations of heaven's currency. And Paul is saying this – listen carefully; don't miss the big point. Paul is saying, God, I want You to give to these people in keeping with the wealth of Your own being. Give them the spiritual resources I'm asking for them, in keeping with the wealth and riches of Your own essential being. Paul could ask audacious requests of God because he knew who God was, and he prayed in keeping with that.

Let me just ask you, as I finish my message this morning – do you pray? It might seem like a silly question to ask a group of Christians, but it's really not – do you pray? Is it important to you; is it important enough to make a part of your day? You say, well, I just don't have time. Well, it was important enough for Christ, it was important enough for Paul, it was important enough for all the apostles, for all the Godly men of scripture – so, exactly what are you doing in your daily life that's more important than what they were doing? And when you pray, do you pray not only in response to your circumstances, but do you pray in response to God's revelation? The scripture – do you let it frame your prayers, do you come before God in

humility, acknowledging Him as your King? And when you pray, how do you think of God – do you think of Him as great and loving Father, as one with unlimited power, one who is incredibly good and generous and who will give you every good thing you need, according to His own wisdom? Do you think of God answering your prayers in accordance with the wealth of His essential being? If you want to pray like Paul, then you have to come to God like this. Let me ask you a question – will you, this week, determine, in obedience to Christ, to set aside time every day to pray? Maybe it's when you get up in the morning, or before you go to bed at night – that's a good start. Will you do that? It's not optional – prayer isn't optional, it's not when I get to it, it's not when I have time – it's a command. Prayer is to our spiritual lives what breathing is to our physical lives – we cannot exist without it. Paul, teach us to pray. Let's pray together.

Father, we thank You for this passage; we feel that we've done such injustice to it – there's so much here, and yet we realize, even with what we've covered, there's much to repent of. Father, forgive us for not praying as we ought, forgive us for thinking that we can carry our own world on our shoulders without Your help – what pride, what arrogance, what presumption. O God, teach us how to pray – help us to follow the example of our Lord and of this great apostle whom You gave us these model prayers to follow. Lord, this week, help us individually to be committed to prayer in obedience to our Lord's command.

We pray it in His name, Amen.