



*30 Day
Prayer
Journey*

WRITTEN BY SEAN COLE

“30 Day Prayer Journey”

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Prayer: The Lifeblood of All True Believers 30 Day Prayer Journey

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Dear Church Family,

As we continue through the Gospel of Luke, we hear the disciples' plea to learn how to pray in Luke 11. Jesus teaches us the Lord's Prayer as a model for both how we should pray and what we should be praying for.

John Calvin gives a great description of prayer as "*a communication between God and us whereby we expound to him our desires, our joys, our sighs, in a word, all the thoughts of our hearts. . . . Prayer is the outpouring of the soul, the deepest root of piety, the bedrock of assurance. **Prayer is the most important part of the Christian life; it is the lifeblood of every true believer.***"

Over the next 30 days, we as a church family will embark on a prayer journey—but not just any prayer journey.

We will explore the recorded prayers in the Bible. It is vitally beneficial to our spiritual maturity to see how those in the Bible prayed. We can learn a great deal from their prayers. As a result, we will engage in the practice of praying the Bible back to God. You can never go wrong when you pray God's written Word back to Him.

Scottish Preacher **Robert Murray McCheyne** said this, "*What a man is on his knees before God, that he is, and nothing more.*"

Charles Spurgeon said, "*My own soul's conviction is that prayer is the grandest power in the entire universe, that it has a more omnipotent force than electricity, attraction, gravitation. . . . If any of you should ask me for an epitome of the Christian religion, I should say it is in that one word—prayer.*"²

Tim Keller says, "*Without immersion in God's words, our prayers may not be merely limited and shallow, but untethered from reality. We may be responding not to the real God but to what we wish God and life to be like.*"

As your pastor, I pray that by praying the Scripture back to the Lord over the next 30 days will prove life changing. My desire is that you grow by leaps and bounds in your praying.

The Shepherd Loves the Sheep,

¹John Calvin, *Commentaries of Calvin: The Psalms* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2005).

²Charles Spurgeon, "True Prayer—True Power!" *The Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, vol. 6 (1860), from the *C. H. Spurgeon Collection*.

³Tim Keller, *Prayer: Experiencing Intimacy with God* (New York: Dutton, 2014) , 62.

Prayer Number One: A PRAYER FOR GOD'S GLORY AND PRESENCE

Day 1:

Read Exodus 33:12-23

This conversation between God and Moses happens right after the disastrous Golden Calf episode where the Israelites plunged themselves into gross immorality. Acting as a mediator for the people, Moses lovingly intercedes on their behalf.

We can learn a great deal about prayer from Moses!

Moses basically says, “God, you’re commanding me to lead these people to the Promise Land, but you are only sending an angel ahead of me? Yet in the same breath, God, you say that you know me and that I have received your grace. This sounds confusing, God. Why won’t You go with us! Don’t just send an angel. God, I’m Your chosen man and these are Your chosen people!”

In other words, for Moses, an angel is not good enough. The Israelites are His chosen people whom He loves and nothing short of God Himself going before them will not be enough. They need God Himself. The face of God.

Notice Moses’ prayer. He wants to know the ways of God so that He can know God more fully. He wants the grace and favor of God.

This is very similar to Paul’s prayer in Philippians

Philippians 3:10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death.”

That’s the way we should pray: **“Lord show me your ways! Reveal yourself to me through Your Word. I want to know You. I want to walk with You and follow You and have my eyes opened to Your working around me.**

Spend time praying Exodus 33:13 back to our great God.

Day 2:

Read Exodus 33:12-23

Moses then intercedes for the nation of Israel. He is a mediator between a sinful people and holy God.

God responds with a very reassuring and triumphant answer. My presence will go with you and I will give you rest. Literally it reads, “My FACE” will go with you.

God promises His very presence with them. We don’t ever have the mention of the angel from this point forward. It is God and God alone and He will give rest.

That’s the answer Moses has been waiting to hear! God’s very Presence will go with them, and He will get them to the Promise Land.

Now in the context of Exodus, this “rest” means entrance into the Promised Land—a land flowing with milk and honey as their rest.

And then we have the heartfelt plea and cry of desperation from Moses in **verse 15**. If your FACE God, if you personally do not go with me, then do not lead us from here.

Is that your prayer for your future? Your family? Our future as a church? God, if You do not go before us, then we don’t want to go. We want to be under your sovereign leadership. We want to be in Your will. We want your ways to be known to us. We want YOU above all, Jesus!

Then Moses asks God “How?” How will we know that You personally, God, are going before us to the Promise Land?

It comes in their distinction. They are elect. They are the chosen of God in whom He has made an everlasting covenant. Because of sovereign grace, God will do it. Because of His promise and His choosing them, they will be given grace and be in His presence.

But that is not enough for Moses. Not only does Moses want to know God and be led by God and to be graced by God, but he wants to see God in all of His majestic glory. It’s not enough for Moses to go to the tent and see a pillar of smoke. He desires to see the full manifestation of God. He wants the whole enchilada!!

God in His grace does something amazing. He promises two things.

First of all, He says that He will make all of His goodness pass before Moses and secondly, that He would proclaim to Him His special name.

God's goodness comprises His character. Who He is in all of His majesty.

Psalm 31:19 ¹⁹ Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!

Isaiah 63:7 I will recount the steadfast love of the LORD, the praises of the LORD, according to all that the LORD has granted us, and the great goodness to the house of Israel that he has granted them according to his compassion, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.

Titus 3:4-6 But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, ⁵ he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, ⁶ whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,

Spend time praying Exodus 33:14 back to the Lord.

Day 3:

Read Exodus 33:12-23

The Lord also proclaims His name: “The LORD”—Yahweh—the personal covenant name of God. What attribute does God apply to both His name and His goodness—sovereign grace. God will be gracious and merciful to whomever He chooses. The word “mercy” literally means “the guts”—God’s deep-seated affections.

But no man can see God’s FACE and live. God is a consuming fire of holiness that will burn away our sinful eyes.

Hebrews 12:28-29 Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, ²⁹ for our God is a consuming fire.

1 Timothy 6:16 who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see. To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.

One commentator has said this, “As our bodily eye is dazzled and its power of vision destroyed by looking directly at the brightness of the sun, so would our whole nature be destroyed by an unveiled sight of the brilliancy of the glory of God.” (Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the Old Testament, Exodus)

So God in His grace and goodness puts Moses in the cleft of the rock while his glory passes by God will cover Moses with His hand and will only allow him to see his backside glory, but never the face.

In doing a study on this passage, I counted 11 times where God says “I will...” I will send, I will drive, I will give, I will make, I will proclaim, etc.”

God is sovereign who acts on behalf of His people. God is the main character. God delivers. God saves. God is in control. One thing we can count on right now in the life of this church, in your own personal life, in the life of this nation, is that God is in control. He is still on His throne.

We must seek the face of the Lord in intense prayer and worship Him not only on Sunday mornings, but in all of our lives—especially our homes.

We must have the same heart's cry as Moses that we want to know Jesus more intimately and understand His ways.

We must long for the presence and leading and guiding of the Lord as we move forward. We don't want to go without His presence going before us.

Just like the pillar of cloud was the visual representation of God, we need two things:

The leading of the LORD

And the Glory of the Lord.

Psalm 115:1 Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

Spend time praying Exodus 33:18-19 back to the Lord and praising Him for His goodness and mercy.

Prayer Number TWO: A Prayer of Confession

Day 4:

Nehemiah Chapter 9

The year was 1904. The place was Wales. God miraculously used the prayers and preaching of young college age students to spark the great Welsh Revival, which had a tremendous impact on that nation. In reading reports of what happened, true community transformation occurred. The crime rate dropped, drunkards were reformed, and pubs reported losses in trade. Bad language disappeared and never returned to the lips of many – it was reported that the mules used for the coalmines failed to understand their masters because they were no longer cussing at them. Even soccer and rugby became uninteresting.

Yet, one of the most famous sayings from the Welsh Revival was “Bend the church to save the world.”

In other words, it was a clarion call for the church to experience such great repentance, mourning over its sin and a confrontation with the living God that this would impact the world. What does it truly mean to be bent?

How does God “Bend” us? Could it be painful? Could it mean a totally radical transformation of our priorities? Could it mean that before God actually brings revival He must “Bend” His church? He must take us through a painful process of confession and repentance?

The word “revival” comes from two words “Re” and “vive”—in other words, revival means to bring back to life those that were sleeping or in a state of complacency.

Do we truly want God to bring revival? To bend us?

There is an old hymn that I used to sing A LOT growing up and it burns in my mind from time to time and I find myself singing it. But I think it should be the anthem of Emmanuel Baptist Church and of all Bible-believing Christians in our land.

*We praise Thee, O God!
For the Son of Thy love,
For Jesus Who died,
And is now gone above.*

*Hallelujah! Thine the glory.
Hallelujah! Amen.
Hallelujah! Thine the glory.
Revive us again.*

*All glory and praise
To the Lamb that was slain,
Who hath borne all our sins,
And hath cleansed every stain.*

*Revive us again;
Fill each heart with Thy love;
May each soul be rekindled
With fire from above.*

*Hallelujah! Thine the glory.
Hallelujah! Amen.
Hallelujah! Thine the glory.
Revive us again.*

Could we say this as an anthem back to our great God? Hallelujah, God you have all the glory, and would you revive us again? Would you bend us? Would you come down and do a unique work of grace and bless us with revival?

Do a DIVINE INTERRUPTION!! Renew that hunger for God's Word deep in our hearts. And lead us to be a confessing and repenting people.

Authentic revival is marked by a repentant response to God's authoritative Word.

It starts with a recovery of the supremacy of God's Word. A hunger and a desire to live under His authority and the powerful preaching of this Word.

How does God speak to us? Through His Word. And how do we speak back to God? In prayer.

And so, in response to God's authoritative Word, the people display a repentance of sin. For seven days, they have been celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles by living in these booths, and now on the 8th day, they call a solemn assembly.

What in the world is a solemn assembly? It is a time set aside for God's people to get serious about being "Bent" by God and to spend serious time in confession and repentance of sin.

So authentic revival manifests itself in repentance to God's Word. Let us explore THREE ways this unfolds in Nehemiah Chapter 9.

Read Nehemiah 9:1-6

The first thing we see when God brings revival is this: **A PASSIONATE CONTRITION over sin in response to God's Word.**

What is contrition? It is a heartfelt mourning and pain over sin. It is a grieving and sadness we experience over the fact that God's Word has confronted us and laid us bare, and we are exposed and all we can do is cry out in anguish to God in contrition

Hebrews 4:12–13 ¹² For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³ And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

Notice what they do. They are fasting and wearing goatskin sackcloth and putting ashes on their heads. In that culture, this was a demonstrable way to show extreme mourning.

This isn't a quick pray up to God but a deeply felt contrition that affected the entire nation. They all gather together, and they separate themselves from foreigners. They are God's people and they have sinned against God.

Revival starts with God's people. We can never expect revival to come if all we concern ourselves with is God doing a work in the big bad world out there and all its sin, but we fail to see our own sin. The world is not God's people. They are lost. They don't know any better. But we as God's people know better.

And notice the passionate timing of this. They stand for a ¼ of the day reading from the Word. Again, the Word of God is central. It always comes back to the authority and preaching of God's Word and then for another ¼ day they stand and make confession of sin and worship God.

Confession is an act of worship. I've been convicted of this lately. How often do we give enough time in our worship services for confession of sin? How often do we pause and confess to God that we have sinned against Him and then flee to the cross to find great comfort in forgiveness?

1 John 1:9 ⁹ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

So, the first thing we see in times of revival is a passionate contrition over sin in response to God's Word.

Spend time praying Nehemiah 9:1-5a back to the Lord.

Day 5

As we continue through this prayer in Nehemiah 9, we see the second aspect: **we see a PRAYERFUL CONFESSION of rebellion in response to God's mercy.**

Read Nehemiah 9:5b-6

This is the actual prayer of the people. It is a long and powerful prayer, so we are going to take it in bite-sized chunks.

There is a key word that shows up repeatedly—MERCY!! God has been merciful, and yet they have been rebellious. They have been stiff-necked.

Now this prayer is interesting because it addresses God and talks about His mercy from Genesis and then goes through every book of the Old Testament up to their current situation. Let's see this unfold.

In verse 5b, they stand and praise this God who is from everlasting to everlasting. In other words, He is the infinite God who has neither beginning nor end. This is even before creation. God has always been.

Isaiah 44:6 ⁶ Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.

Psalm 95:3–8 ³ For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods. ⁴ In his hand are the depths of the earth; the heights of the mountains are his also. ⁵ The sea is his, for he made it, and his hands formed the dry land. ⁶ Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD, our Maker! ⁷ For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, ⁸ do not harden your hearts....

But in verse 6, they praise God for being the unique Creator. He alone is God. He is the only true and living God who has created the universe by the power of His Word.

This is starting in Genesis with creation.

But in addressing God this way as the unique creator, the Israelites are dealing with two issues that I think are very prevalent in our culture today.

Idolatry and pluralism.

What do I mean by this? We must establish from the very beginning that God alone is the sovereign Creator who is to be worshipped. So many people are worshipping idols instead of God. They are worshipping created things—spouses, children, money, sex, careers, sports, recreation, or anything else that is above God.

John Calvin said that the human heart is an idol factory.

And, pluralism is the idea that there are many paths to God and all “gods” are equal. If you want to worship Allah, that’s okay, or Buddha, or Vishnu, or some New Age guru god. They’re all basically the same.

Absolutely NOT! You are the LORD, you alone! God alone is God.

Spend time praying Nehemiah 9:5b-8 back to the Lord.

Day 6

Read Nehemiah 9:7-8

So, let's continue through this prayer and see how it moves through Genesis to the calling of Abraham. God is the covenant God who chooses Abraham and makes a covenant with him to birth the nation of Israel and to bless the world and to give him the Promised Land.

Notice the end of verse 8—God is the promise keeping God. He is the covenant God. He made a promise to the Israelites that He would bind Himself to them as their God even when they failed miserably.

Then we move to Exodus. God is the Redeemer God who made a name for Himself by saving them out of bondage and leading them through the Red Sea. God rescued these Israelites by His outstretched arm to make a name for Himself and display His glory.

Read Nehemiah 9:9-12

Then we have Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy as God gave them the law at Sinai and led them through the wilderness with manna and quail and water from the rock. So not only is God the Creator God and Covenant God and Redeemer God, but He is the Law-Giving God. He has given His people the standard of their behavior through the Ten Commandments.

Read Nehemiah 9:13-15

But as we come to verse 16, how did the people respond to this great God?

Read Nehemiah 9:13-21

They acted rebelliously and stiffened their necks and walked in disobedience. And the height of this treachery was the golden calf. This was the ultimate of blaspheme.

But in all of this, how did God respond? With MERCY.

We see this credo in verse 17 that God introduced back in Exodus 34 when He appeared to Moses in the cleft of the rock.

Exodus 34:5–6 ⁵The LORD descended in the cloud and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the LORD. ⁶The LORD passed before him and proclaimed,

“The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness,

Time and time again over and over God revealed Himself this way in the Old Testament and the Israelites kept spitting in His face and rebelling and disobeying Him in His great mercy.

How long is God’s patience anyway!! How long is His infinite fuse?? When we think of the Israelites and all the shenanigans, they did it’s no wonder God didn’t obliterate them off the map. But He had made a covenant with them and promised them His unfailing love.

In verse 19, in his great mercies He even gave them the Holy Spirit to guide them.

Read Nehemiah 9:22-25

Then we move into the book of Joshua with the conquest of the Promised Land. God in His mercy gave them victory to take the land under the leadership of Joshua.

In verse 25, this was a result of God’s great goodness. Repeatedly God showed mercy, compassion, goodness and faithfulness.

Yet what happened, in verse 26, they were disobedient and rebelled and so God had to send them Judges or “saviors” to deliver them. This is the book of Judges.

Read Nehemiah 9:26-28

And what word is repeated in verse 28? God’s “mercies”!

But again, how did Israel respond to God’s mercy? In rebellion and wickedness and disobedience.

Read Nehemiah 9:29-31

In His mercy God sent them prophets to warn them—this is 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, and 1 and 2 Chronicles. People like Elijah and Jeremiah and Amos and Isaiah.

So, what eventually happened to this repeated cycle of disobeying and rebelling against God and His mercy? The EXILE—they were kicked out of the Promise Land and taken captive by Babylon.

But again, what is repeated in verse 31—God is great in mercy, and He promised to never leave nor forsake them. So now it comes to their present situation.

They are back in the Promised Land after being kicked out for 70 years and now the wall is rebuilt, and they are coming to this overwhelming conclusion that God has been merciful and yet they have been rebellious.

This is a prayer confession of rebellion in response to God's mercies.

How has God been merciful to you? And how have you been rebellious and wicked?

Are we broken and grieved over our sin? Do we passionately confess it as rebellion against a holy God? Do we slap the sacrifice of Christ in the face and belittle His mercy in our rebellion?

Romans 2:4 ⁴Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

So far, we've seen two evidences of genuine revival: A passionate contrition and a prayerful confession.

Spend time praying Nehemiah 9:9-31 back to the Lord focusing on His faithfulness to the nation of Israel and how He has been faithful to you.

Day 7

Now let's explore continue exploring this prayer in Nehemiah.

A POWERFUL CONCESSION of guilt in response to God's justice.

Read Nehemiah 9:32-37

We see a transition in the actual prayer in verse 32. It starts with "Therefore". In other words, up to this point they've been confessing sin and recounting the mercies of God, but now they are moving into the actual request itself.

And notice how they address God: great and mighty, awesome, covenant keeping God and a God of steadfast love.

So, what is their prayer request?

Let not all this hardship seem little to you. In other words, Lord we are in great distress over our sin. We've been taken into captivity, and we are no longer the nation that you meant for us to be. We may be back in Jerusalem, but we don't have our own king. We are subjects to Persia. Have mercy on us as we are back in the land.

We know why we are here and why we are slaves and why this Exile has happened to us—because we have been rebellious!

You were merciful in the past, now be merciful on us because we deserve nothing but wrath!!!

That's the powerful concession of guilt in response to God's justice.

What do they say in verse 33—We have acted wickedly, and we are making the powerful concession that what You have done, God, is absolutely RIGHT. We deserved exile. We deserve wrath and punishment and obliteration. We don't deserve your mercy. We are guilty as charged.

There is no haggling or bargaining or manipulating God. There's no covering up sin or lightening it. There is complete ownership and the acknowledgment that they are guilty, and God is just. God has every right to do what HE wants with them.

Do we think in these terms? Do we truly believe that God has absolutely sovereignty over our lives and that God was not obligated to save any one of us? There is nothing in the universe that is making God save us or show mercy to us when everything in

the universe points to the fact that if anything, we deserve nothing but wrath and hell. We are guilty as charged and all we can do is plead for mercy.

Habakkuk 3:2 ² O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

That's in essence what the Israelites were crying out to God! You've done revivals in the past. We've just recounted all your mighty works from Genesis up to the present. And we know that you have every right to act in wrath and we deserve nothing but wrath, but please remember mercy. Remember us! Act in mercy like you did before!

Again, may I ask it: Are we in a time of revival?

Are we in days where believers are mourning over our sin and crying out for mercy from God and repenting publicly from years and years of sin. And not only our own sins, but also the sins of our generation and the generation before us. Are we truly serious about sin and do we passionately and powerfully and prayerfully confess it and then repent from it?

The word in verse 35 for "turn" is a key word in Hebrew that means to repent (*sub*). To turn the other direction. To make a 180 degree turn and start walking and living in another direction.

God is a forgiving God and a merciful God and has sent Jesus Christ to die for sin and to rise again for our victory.

Forgiveness is not automatic. It hinges on repentance.

Charles Spurgeon said this of repentance: "Our repentance should be as notorious as our sin". In other words, it should be known to others!

Bend the church to save the world!

God would you in your MERCY bend us who are REBELLIOUS!!

Hallelujah, Thine the glory, Hallelujah, amen, Hallelujah, thin the glory, REVIVE us again.

God would you in your MERCY revive us again!!

Spend time praying Nehemiah 9:32-37 back to the Lord.

Prayer Number THREE: A Powerful Pattern of Prayer

Day 8:

Daniel 9:1-19

Praying seems to be one of those things that we know we should do as Christians but sometimes it is the hardest thing we can do. We pray when there's a crisis and we pray during times of trials, but do we pray when things are going well. How many of us can actually say we have a dynamic, thriving, healthy prayer life?

I want to ask you two questions about prayer that Daniel Chapter 9 answers for us.

The first question is this: **WHY should I pray if God is sovereign, and He's got it all figured out and is going to accomplish His will regardless of us.**

There is a fallacy in that question. We know that God is sovereign. That is absolutely true. But nowhere in Scripture are we ever told that God is going to accomplish His will regardless of us. Did you ever think that God accomplishes His will THROUGH us and He uses our prayers to do just that?

Now we don't control or manipulate God or arm twist Him to get Him to do what we want, but because God is sovereign it should motivate us to pray even more because we know if anything is ever going to happen it is because God will get it done and only Him!

I pray BECAUSE God is sovereign. I don't change His mind but praying changes my mind to His purposes.

Do you remember what Jesus said in Matthew 6?

Matthew 6:8 ...for your Father knows what you need before you ask him.

If God knows what we need before we ask Him, then why pray? We aren't giving Him a list of things He doesn't already know? It's not like God is saying "Wow, I didn't know that thanks for telling me! I was really wondering?"

No God is absolutely sovereign, and He calls us to pray because it reveals His heart for relationship. God desires us to pray because it draws us into His presence and

shows our utter dependence upon Him and because He's sovereign, we can pray with confidence that God will accomplish what He plans to accomplish.

So, the first question we ask is if God is sovereign, then why pray is really a silly question.

But the second question I think is more to the point. **It is this: HOW should I pray?** The first question asked the "WHY" but most of struggle with the "HOW"? How do I do it?

I think it is always very beneficial to read the actual recorded prayers in Scripture which give us powerful patterns for prayer, and we find one of the most powerful prayers in the Old Testament.

For those of us who struggle with praying and for those of us who want a powerful pattern for prayer, I want us to look closely at Daniel's prayer and see what we can learn.

I want us to see four overarching issues regarding prayer from Daniel 9:1-19

First of all, let us examine the REASON for his prayer.

Read Daniel 9:1-2

The first question we must ask is what is the reason for Daniel to pray? What prompted him to get on his knees before God?

And the number one answer is the Scriptures. Notice that in verse 2, Daniel is reading the book of Jeremiah and thinking about his current condition. This is amazing to me. Daniel is reading from the Bible in his own time, and he comes across information that is pertinent to what is going on in his own time.

Remember the story of Daniel. When he was a teenager, he was yanked from his life in Israel and taken captive to Babylon for this time of exile. He underwent this three-year indoctrination period and then rose into the ranks of becoming a great leader in the nation. But would this exile last forever? Would there ever be an end to it?

What did he read in Jeremiah?

Jeremiah 25:11-12 This whole land shall become a ruin and a waste, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. ¹² Then after seventy years are

completed, I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, declares the LORD, making the land an everlasting waste.

What Daniel reads in Jeremiah is that this exile should only last 70 years. God had made an infallible promise that after the 70 years, he would bring the Israelites back to the Promised Land.

Jeremiah 29:10 ¹⁰ "For thus says the LORD: When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.

Daniel is an old man now and he is realizing that this exile may be coming to an end and God will make good on His promise.

So, here's the question again. If God has promised it and it was prophesied by Jeremiah and it is basically a done deal because God is absolutely sovereign, then why does Daniel pray? Isn't this just a waste of time?

Daniel could have had this "oh well who cares attitude" but instead of that he understood the power of God's sovereignty and knew that God was putting things in motion to bring the exile to a close and because of that, it gave Daniel the confidence to pray

Let me say this very clearly! Especially around here at Emmanuel where we believe strongly in the sovereignty of God. God's sovereignty is never ever an excuse for LAZINESS, LACK OF PRAYER, or LACK OF EVANGELISM!

We pray, we serve, we witness, we do missions because God is sovereign and we trust that He will work out His purposes, but the joy is in the journey. The joy is in being a part of God's work. The joy is in the relationship. God is drawing us closer to Him through prayer and while we don't change God's mind, He is in the process of changing us to become more and more like His Son Jesus.

Let me be real practical here. Daniel prayed in essence with an open Bible. The Scriptures informed his prayer life. We too should pray with an open Bible.

For many of us, prayer can be a mindless exercise where we just start saying our trite expressions and we go off on tangents and then our mind wanders, and we never really get anywhere. Let me give you a challenge. Pray the prayers in the Bible directly

back to God! Or after you've just read a portion of Scripture—pray that back in your own words to God. That gives you focus to your praying. It gives your prayers meat!!

So, the first issue we see is the reason why Daniel prays. And it is twofold. He prays because he was informed by Scripture and secondly, he prays because God is sovereign, and He knows with utmost confidence that God will accomplish His purposes and we can join Him in that through praying.

Spend time praising God for His sovereignty that He will accomplish His purposes THROUGH your praying.

Day 9:

As we continue, let us see the **ATTITUDE of the prayer.**

Read Daniel 9:3

Daniel is a humble and contrite man who is desperate for God's power and presence. He pleads for mercy. He undergoes a fast. He is in sackcloth and ashes.

This wasn't a "Dear Lord bless me" quick prayer while falling asleep at the end of the day type of prayer. This was an intense time of prayer. His attitude was one of desperation. He was desperate for God.

He turned his face to the LORD God. This is a strong expression in the Hebrew language which means that he sought the Lord diligently and wasn't going to stop praying until he was exhausted and received an answer.

He is praying to the LORD God—that is Adonai—the sovereign King. Daniel acknowledges again that God is King and absolutely sovereign, and he is bowing himself before this great God in sackcloth and ashes.

In that ancient culture, this was a symbolic way to express deep humility almost to the point of grieving where you showed an utter dependence upon God.

While we don't wear sackcloth and ashes today, we are called to fast and pray. To set aside special times for intense prayer.

The real issue in prayer is your attitude. Are you lazy? Flippant? Disorganized? Or are you focused, desperate, humble, and truly seeking the Lord.

Let me again be very practical here. When I have my quiet times or daily devotionals, I kneel when I pray, and I pray out loud. There is something about kneeling that puts you in the posture of dependence. Also, praying out loud helps you stay awake and focused.

Listen to some of the cries of anguish in the Psalmists prayers as they humbled themselves in desperation for God.

Psalm 63:1 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water

Psalm 73:25-26 Whom have I in heaven but you? And there is nothing on earth that I desire besides you. ²⁶ My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.

So why do we pray? Because God is sovereign, and He reveals this to us through the Scripture. So, the Bible should inform our praying.

How should we pray? In an attitude of humility and desperation seeking the face of the Lord with urgency and zeal.

Spend time using Daniel 9:3 as a model to earnestly seek the Lord.

Day 10:

Now let's see the actual **ELEMENTS** of the prayer. What does Daniel actually pray and how does He organize the prayer? What are the elements of prayer that we can pattern in our own prayer lives?

Read Daniel 9:4-19

From this heartfelt, desperate prayer to the Sovereign God, we see **three basic elements to the prayer.**

First of all, we see ADORATION or PRAISE.

How does Daniel start his prayer?

In verse 4, we see Daniel praising God first and foremost. Before he begins to ask God for anything He begins with God's character. He praises God. He extols and magnifies God.

God is great and awesome. He is a covenant keeping God who shows that steadfast love—that "hesed"—that tenacious, loyal, unconditional covenant love to His people.

In verse 9, he praised God for being merciful and forgiving.

Notice in verse 14, Daniel continues to praise God for being righteous.

This is the pattern we see in almost every recorded prayer in the Bible. The prayers almost always start with words of praise to God for His character or for His wondrous works.

This is how Jesus taught us to pray as well.

Matthew 6:9-10 ⁹ Pray then like this: "Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name.
¹⁰ Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

Jesus tells us to praise God for his holiness and majesty and to seek His kingdom before we do any asking.

When we start with praise, it again shows the sovereignty of God and the majesty of God, and it allows us time to relish in the relationship. When we tell God how awesome He is, we are growing in our relationship with Him. He becomes more than

just a genie in a bottle or a cosmic Santa Clause, but a Heavenly Father, with whom we have a dynamic relationship through His Son Jesus.

Again, let's get very practical here. We should start our prayers with praise and adoration. And again, therefore it is so important to have your Bible open when you pray. How has God revealed Himself in Scripture. How do you know that you're praising God in the right way? By what He has told you about Himself in the Bible.

Let's do an exercise right now with this verse 4.

Daniel praises God for His covenant and steadfast love. You can just throw up a prayer to God and say I praise you for your love. But let's go deeper. In your praying, how has God shown you love? How has God been great and awesome? What has God done for you? As you begin to think about what the Scriptures say about God you can begin to go deeper into praising Him.

So, Daniel along with almost every other recorded prayer in the Bible starts with praise.

Spend time praying Daniel 9:4 back to the Lord in praise and adoration.

Day 11:

Yesterday we saw the first element of Daniel's prayer—adoration or praise.

But secondly, he moves on to CONFESSION of sin. This is really the bulk of his prayer. From verses 5-14 he begins to just pour out his heart about sin and the need for repentance.

In verse 5, we see the actual beginning of this confession. Notice that he doesn't gloss over the situation or make light of it or try to ignore it. He calls it what it is—sin. And he gets very specific.

He uses words like wicked and rebellion and turning aside.

Let me say this: Confession of sin in your prayer life needs to be *specific*.

Many times, we just use these blanket prayers: Lord, forgive me of my sins and then we move on to our laundry list of things we want God to do for us.

We must remember that as believers all our sins—past, present, and future—have been paid for by Jesus on the cross so we have been totally forgiven. So, when we pray we are not necessarily asking God to forgive us because He's already done that through Jesus. What we are doing is confession.

What exactly is confession. Confession in the New Testament comes from two Greek words which mean to “say the same thing”. In other words, to confess means that we agree with God that what we have done is sinful. We acknowledge our sin. We call it out as sin. We express to God how this sin has broken His laws and grieved His Holy Spirit. We don't hide our sin but bring it out into the open and get very real with God. And very specific.

Notice some of the specific sins that Daniels confesses.

In verse 6, he says that they have not listened to the message of warnings from the prophets.

Here's a question for you? Why are they in exile in the first place? Why did they have to be overtaken by Babylon and had to experience 70 years in captivity? Because the Israelites had become so hardened and sinful and didn't listen to the warnings of the prophets like Jeremiah who preached to them to repent and turn back to God before it was too late. They wanted to kill Jeremiah—they beat him and put him in jail, and

he was mocked for preaching against sin. And because they didn't listen to him the entire nation plunged into gross idolatry and wickedness and were thus sent into exile as punishment.

In verse 11, he specifically addresses this issue. The bottom line is that they didn't obey God's commands as set forth through the Law of Moses. In Deuteronomy 28 God tells them that if they fail to obey, they will be kicked out of the Promised Land and go into exile.

And Daniel is confessing that sin. He didn't even commit that sin—his parents and grandparents did, but he acknowledges that he is part of that covenant community.

And in this process of confession, he acknowledges that God has done this in His righteousness and that He has every right to punish His people. But instead of turning to God in repentance and brokenness and seeking His mercy, the people continued in rebellion and sin.

Notice what he says in verse 13. They did not repent. They did not turn. They did not seek the truth. They continued in disobedience.

Confession is more than just a quick glossing over of your sin, but it is an open acknowledgement of specific sins and then the desire to repent of those and find grace in Christ.

As believers, confession should always drive us back to the cross.

Robert Murray McCheyne said this: *"For every look at self, take ten looks at the cross."*

John Newton, that famous slave trader turned pastor who wrote the song "Amazing Grace" said this on his deathbed when someone came and reminded him of how rotten and sinful, he was. He said, *"I am a great sinner, yes, but I have a far greater Savior."*

Tim Keller said this, *"I am more flawed and sinful than I ever dared believe, but in Christ, I am even more loved and accepted than I ever dared imagined."*

Confession should be real and specific, but it should never lead us to despair or doubt or unhealthy self-introspection. Instead, it should always lead us to the cross and find our joy and grace in Christ who has forgiveness of all our sins and accepts us God's child because of His saving work on our behalf.

1 John 1:8 - If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Spend time in confession praying Daniel 9:5-14 back to the Lord.

Day 12:

Daniel 9:15-19

So far, we've seen the elements of the prayer to be first of all, adoration, and second of all, confession, **now thirdly, we see PETITION**. Or the actual requests if you will.

In verses 15-19, we find Daniel pleading with God to actually do something.

In verse 15, we find something that is often done in Biblical prayers. The person praying reminds God of what He has done in the past. It's not a bargaining chip with God where you are trying to butter up to Him and remind Him of how awesome He acted in the past as if somehow, He forgot. It's more to remind the person praying that God was faithful in the past and therefore, He will be faithful in the future.

Daniel knows that God delivered the nation out of Egyptian bondage into the Promised Land and that He can do it again. He can deliver them out of Babylonian bondage and take them to the Promised Land a second time.

He prays specifically that they would return to Jerusalem and that that the beloved city would not lie in ruins. Again, Daniel has read in Jeremiah that this will happen so he knows God will do it. Again, why does he pray it if it's a done deal? Not to change God's mind, but to pour out his heart in relationship to God and to show his desperation and utter dependence on God to move.

Listen to the words Daniel uses when he prays for God to act.

In verse 17, we have "listen to my prayer" and "make your face shine upon your sanctuary."

In verse 18, "incline your ear and here." "Open your eyes"

In verse 19, "forgive" "pay attention" "Act" "Don't delay"

Does this sound overly pressuring to you? Almost as if Daniel is pushing God to get his way and is being forceful? Before you answer that, read some of the other prayers in the Bible and you will see this same thing. Especially in the Psalms. We see people crying out in anguish and desperation for God to act quickly and to do something powerful.

Is there anything wrong with that? Should we not pray with boldness? Should we not be shy about asking God to work out His plan quickly?

Spend time in praying asking God SPECIFICALLY to act according to His will!

Day 13:

Daniel 9:15-19

As we continue through Daniel's model prayer we come to a very important issue: **the BASIS for Daniel's prayer.**

In **verse 18**, we find the key. We find the answer to the question about Daniel's anguish and wanting God to move quickly. Can we ask boldly? Can we come with anguish and want God to work quickly? Can we come to our Heavenly Father with persistence and want Him to move?

Yes, but the answer comes in verse 18 when we adopt the proper perspective about God and the proper perspective about us as His creation.

Notice that Daniel says that he is not praying and asking these things because of their righteousness. In other words, Daniel is saying to God: I don't bring anything to the table. I'm not worthy for you to even answer these requests. God, I cannot manipulate you. I cannot demand you. I cannot somehow twist your arm to respond. In fact, I don't even deserve an answer from you because the only thing I contribute to this equation is my weakness, sin, and total dependence on you. I can offer you nothing. I cannot offer you my righteousness.

So the basis for Daniel's prayer is not his impeccable character or even his faithfulness or obedience or steadfastness or his stellar record as God's man in Babylon. We can't appeal to our resume!

So then, what is the basis for this prayer and for all prayer as a matter of fact? The basis for it all is on **God's great mercy.**

God is not obligated to answer. God is not obligated to move and act. God owes us nothing. But because of His great mercy, and because He is a wonderful heavenly Father, He will give us what is best.

Notice I didn't say He will give us what we want. But He will give us what is best.

Here's the bottom line when it comes to praying and asking God to move and to act and to answer. Here's what we should say after we've poured our hearts out to God.

Father, whatever will bring you the most glory and whatever will conform me the most to Your Son Jesus, that is what I want.

I come to you in humility knowing that you are good and merciful and powerful, and you care for me and only through Christ and His cross and your amazing grace will I get anything.

So yes, we can pray and ask and wrestle with God and cry out to Him and ask Him to move and to act, but we must remember, that at the end of the day, God acts, and God answers, and God grants blessings NOT because of anything within us that moves Him to do so. Instead, it is because He is a sovereign and loving Father and He decides to act based upon what would bring Him the most glory and be for our greatest good.

Spend time meditating on Daniel 9:18 as the foundation for your praying.

Prayer Number FOUR: A Prayer for Boldness

Day 14:

We now move out of the Old Testament and come to the New Testament.

Read Acts 4:23-31

Let me give you some background. Peter and John were arrested for preaching Jesus and healing a lame man in Jesus' name. This was the first wave of persecution to hit this infant church. And during persecution and hardship and pressure and resistance, God shows up in a powerful way. He displays His great power and His great grace in the life of the early church.

We get a snapshot into the nature and character of the early church which helps us as Emmanuel to see how we should be living considering the Scriptures.

We see that this early church was characterized by **EARNEST PRAYER**.

In verses 24-31, we see this desperate persecuted pressured church at prayer. This has been their heartbeat from day one. In Chapter 1, they devoted themselves to prayer. In Chapter 2 they devoted themselves to prayer and now we get to see the exact words that they prayed when they were in earnest prayer.

We see a repeated word that is truly very important—they raised their voices in prayer **TOGETHER**.

Just a side note: Being a Christian is not a lone-ranger existence where it's just you and Jesus and no connection to the church. The early church was together. They were doing life together. They were always together. It was a community. It was a fellowship.

We see three major parts of this prayer. First of all, we see the introductory address to God. Secondly, we see the request itself. And thirdly, we see God's amazing answer to the prayer.

Let's look at each three of these.

First of all, in verse 24-28, we have the **introductory address to God and it is composed of three parts**.

The first part of the address is a focus on God's absolute sovereignty as our Creator.

Notice how they address God—“Sovereign Lord”—and then they focus Him as Creator.

This word “Sovereign Lord” can be translated Master.

This is how we should pray. We don’t begin our requests with our laundry list to God, but we acknowledge Him as our Sovereign Creator. We spend time praising Him for His glory and majesty and His right to rule and reign.

Psalm 146:5-6 ⁵ Blessed is he whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the LORD his God, ⁶ who made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that is in them, who keeps faith forever;

When we pray, we are coming into the presence of God Almighty who does as He pleases and no one can thwart His purposes.

Psalm 33:8-11 Let all the earth fear the LORD; let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him! ⁹ For he spoke, and it came to be; he commanded, and it stood firm. ¹⁰ The LORD brings the counsel of the nations to nothing; he frustrates the plans of the peoples. ¹¹ The counsel of the LORD stands forever, the plans of his heart to all generations.

Isaiah 46:9-10 remember the former things of old; for I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me, ¹⁰ declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times things not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will accomplish all my purpose,

So, the first part of this introduction focuses on the sovereignty of God as our Creator.

Secondly, in this introduction, they appeal to Scripture as their content.

They pray the Bible back to God in their situation. This is helpful when it comes to praying. When you pray the Bible back to God, you know you are praying correctly because it is His holy Word.

They quote Psalm 2:1-2

They knew from their Old Testament that this was a Messianic Psalm speaking of Jesus—the anointed King.

The nations, the rulers, are plotting in vain to come against Jesus the Messiah. Why are they plotting in vain? What can they really do to Jesus?

Let's read some more of the Psalm and see their train of thought in this prayer.

Psalm 2:4-6 He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. ⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, ⁶ "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill."

This is the only time the Bible refers to God laughing, and it is a mocking laugh at the futility and blind arrogance of those who would dare come against Jesus. God will execute His wrath and He does so by setting up His own King—Jesus.

There may be dictators on thrones in South Korea, and Sudan, and Iran, and Cuba, and there may be a President in the Oval Office, and there may be a Secretary of the United Nations and there may be powerful people all over the world in high political office, but there is no one higher than the King Jesus who is seated on His throne.

And we do see that in time these rulers did come against Jesus. They did crucify Him. In verse 27, we have listed of those who were responsible for the death of Jesus.

Herod was responsible. Pilate was responsible. The Gentiles were responsible. And the Jews were responsible. All four of these in their wickedness and cowardice and arrogance crucified Jesus.

But, here's the third part of this introduction. They not only address God as Sovereign Creator, and they not only appeal to Scripture, but they know that God has a predestined plan, and He will accomplish it.

Who was ultimately responsible for the death of Jesus—God Himself? His hand and His plan had predestined the death of Jesus. Evil men did evil acts against Jesus, and they will be hold solely responsible for those acts at the great judgment, but behind it all God was working out His predestined plan. He works out all things according to the counsel of His will.

One thing we need to be very aware of when we pray is that God has a definite plan. Now, we may not ever know what that plan is, and God is not every obligated to reveal His secret plans to us, but when we pray, we can rest with a solid assurance that this Sovereign God has a plan and a purpose, and it cannot be stopped.

Job 42:2 "I know that you can do all things, and that no purpose of yours can be thwarted.

Is this how you pray? Do you focus on the absolute sovereignty of God as your Creator? Do you use the Scripture as the content of your prayers? Do you trust in God's unwavering plan to glorify Himself?

Or do you start there, or do you go straight for the laundry list of all the things you want God to do for you?

Spend time praying Acts 4:24 back to the Lord.

Day 15:

Let's continue through **Acts 4:23-31** and see **the actual request itself**.

And again, there are three parts to the request.

First of all, in verse 29, they ask God to look upon the threats of these religious rulers. In other words, they are under pressure, and they want God to notice their dire situation.

But here's what I find very interesting and amazing. Notice what they DON'T pray—they don't pray— "God get rid of these threats. God take me out of harm's way. God take away the persecution. God make life easy for us."

No, it's simple request for God to notice their plight.

And here's the amazing second part of their request. They don't pray for ease in this persecution, but they pray for boldness. They pray that in the face of this opposition with these leaders breathing threats down their necks, they would be able to continue to speak the gospel with all boldness.

We see this word "boldness"—it is a key word in Acts. It means freedom of speech, an other worldly courage to boldly and clearly proclaim Jesus.

Ephesians 6:18-20 ⁸ 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.

Is this how you pray? Do you pray for boldness regardless of the consequences? Do you pray for ease of life and your best life now, or do you understand that in God's sovereign plan, being a Christian will bring hostility.

John 15:18-19 "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. ¹⁹ If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

2 Timothy 3:12 Indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Spend some time praying and asking God for boldness to share the gospel.

Day 16:

Let's continue through Acts 4:23-31

What's the third part of their request? Lord, show the power of your hand in doing great signs and wonders that can only be explained by your glory.

They wanted God to do only what God alone could do so that after God did it only, He would get the glory and they would stand back in amazement.

There's a powerful metaphor in them asking for God to stretch out His hand. When you go back and read the Old Testament, God's outstretched hand or arm was often used of His power to deliver them out of trouble.

What did God do when He delivered the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage through the Red Sea?

Exodus 6:6 Say therefore to the people of Israel, 'I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will deliver you from slavery to them, and I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and with great acts of judgment

Are we praying for God to do great and amazing things in our midst that can only be explained by His mighty outstretched hand?

So we have seen the introduction of the prayer, we have seen the request itself, and now let's see God's amazing answer and again it comes in three ways.

First of all, the place was shaken.

This is very reminiscent of Pentecost with the sound of a mighty rushing wind. In Isaiah 6, the temple was filled with smoke and the thresholds shook.

Exodus 19:18 Now Mount Sinai was wrapped in smoke because the LORD had descended on it in fire. The smoke of it went up like the smoke of a kiln, and the whole mountain trembled greatly.

Secondly, they were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

You may be wondering—weren't they filled with the Holy Spirit at Pentecost?

Yes, this filling is not the indwelling of the Holy Spirit or the baptism of the Holy Spirit, but a supernatural occurrence where the Holy Spirit fills you with power in an instant to boldly proclaim the gospel.

And that's what we see next.

Thirdly, they continued to speak the word of God with boldness.

Again, boldness is the key word in this passage. They prayed for boldness and God filled them with the Holy Spirit to empower them to continue to speak with boldness.

We need boldness. We need to be able to witness about Jesus clearly and boldly.

You see this repeated pattern in Acts. The people pray like crazy. They are marked by earnest prayer and their prayer request is for boldness. And then God answers that prayer by filling them with the Holy Spirit and then they continue to speak boldly.

That's what we as a church and as individual Christians need to be praying for—the filling of the Holy Spirit so that we can continue to be bold.

Spend some time in prayer asking God to do great and amazing things in our midst that can only be explained by His mighty outstretched hand?

Prayer Number FIVE: A Prayer to Know God More Deeply

Day 17:

Ephesians 1:15-23

Back in 1992 when I first met Dawn in college, I knew a little bit about her from a distance. I knew she was from Denver. I knew she was a student at Metro State. I knew she was part of the Denver Baptist Student Union. And then when I first met Dawn our college group went out to eat at Village Inn and I got to sit next to Dawn and found out she liked Scooby-Doo and Def Leppard!! I was in heaven. I had never met a girl with that combination. And then for a few months, I never saw Dawn again, but I thought about her a lot and began to ask people who knew her more questions about her. I had a casual and distant knowledge about Dawn, but it wasn't until I started dating Dawn that I truly got to know her. I got to know her likes and dislikes, her dreams and aspirations, her sense of humor. And to this day, I take great joy in getting to know Dawn more deeply.

For there to be a true intimate and exciting relationship—whatever that is—husband to wife, friend to friend, parent to child—there must be this deeper knowledge and desire to know the other person more fully.

Now how does this relate to God? It is the same thing. If we are to have a deep, intimate, and exciting relationship with the living God, we need to get to know Him more deeply. It is great to know about God—to learn about theology and to have the facts of God from the Bible embedded in our brains. But that is not enough. We need to experientially know God more deeply in order to grow in our Christian lives.

And that is exactly what Paul prays for in our passage today.

Are you satisfied with a casual, distant, dry relationship with God or do you desire a vibrant, rich, intimate relationship with the Father where you are growing in your faith and knowing Him more deeply?

Let's look at Paul's prayer and see how it affects us today.

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

So, here's the big question: What is Paul praying for?

He spends the opening section thanking God for the report he's heard of the Ephesians Christians showing love to each other and growing in their faith.

The opening preposition in verse 17 denotes the purpose or the content of Paul's prayer. It tells us what he is going to pray for.

He prays to the Father of glory—notice the very specific address—He prays to the Father. This is how Jesus taught us to pray. We pray to the Father, in the name of Jesus through the power of the Holy Spirit. And he acknowledges that the Father is the Father of glory.

Paul's prayer is that God would give them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know God better.

1 Corinthians 2:12-14 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual. ¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

The meaning of that Greek word “knowledge” means to know better or to know more intimately –to fully grasp God's power.

Paul is not talking here about new revelations of knowledge or some newfound mystery. The Holy Spirit's job as our Helper is to guide us in the Truth. The truth that has already been written down in Scripture.

John 16:13-14 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.

You see some people on television who claim to have these new revelations or these new things from God, but that is not what Paul is talking about. He is simply praying that the Holy Spirit would clearly reveal to us the truths about God that are very clear in Scripture. And as we shall see, Paul gets very specific in what he is praying that we understand more fully.

So, the primary prayer from Paul for us is that the Holy Spirit would enable us to know God better and more intimately as He opens the eyes of our hearts. That the

eyes of our hearts would be illuminated. The Greek word is “photizo”—it is where we get photo—to light up. To illumine.

Psalm 27:1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

Only the Holy Spirit can do this. Only He can open the eyes of our hearts to know God more deeply.

2 Corinthians 4:6 For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

So Paul’s ultimate prayer is that we as believers would know God more deeply and intimately.

Spend time praying Ephesians 1:16-18 back to the Lord.

Day 18:

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

How do we know God more deeply?

I believe there are two components. One is objective and the other is subjective.

First, we know God objectively through the Scriptures. God has clearly chosen to reveal His character and attributes through the Bible and so we must saturate ourselves with the Scriptures to truly understand God more deeply and know Him better.

Psalm 19:8 the precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes;

How can we know how to properly worship and love God if we don't know the God of the Bible. We may be inadvertently worshipping a "god" we've made up in our own minds. We need the clear teachings of the Scripture to inform how we know God more deeply. The more time you spend in the Word seeing God and learning about God and seeing Jesus in action the more you come to appreciate Him and know Him.

For example, in Exodus, it is amazing how many times God says that He is delivering the Israelites out of Egyptian bondage to make a name for Himself. God does all of this for His glory and for His name's sake. It's not so that the Israelites can boast in their power and might or that they can depend on their resources. It's not so that Pharaoh—the greatest and most powerful man in the world can make a name for himself and exalt his reputation—it is so that God can make a name for Himself.

Exodus 20:24 In every place where I cause my name to be remembered I will come to you and bless you.

That's just one example of how we know God more deeply. We read the Scriptures and find out the heart of God. He's all about making a name for Himself.

But secondly, we know God subjectively by spending time with Him in prayer. We share our hearts, our dreams, our failures, our sin, and we bare our souls to our Father and through this time in prayer we get to know Him more deeply. We commune with Him in prayer. We talk to Him. We draw near to Him. We cry out to Him.

Psalm 63:1-4 O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. ² So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory. ³ Because your steadfast love is better than life, my lips will praise you. ⁴ So I will bless you as long as I live; in your name I will lift up my hands.

Here's what it should look like—we should be a people on our knees crying out desperately for God in prayer and with our other hand we should have an open Bible before our eyes so that we can truly know truth.

We need both of these—sound doctrine and vigorous affections. We need light—the truth of the Word to inform how we worship God. We need the light of Scripture to know God more deeply. But at the same time, we need heat. We need the heat of strong affections and deep feeling of joy as we pray to God.

Spend time asking God to open the eyes of your heart to know Him more deeply.

Day 19:

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

Now let's look at the three specific things for which Paul prays.

Remember his primary prayer is that the Holy Spirit would open the eyes of our hearts to know God more deeply. And now he gets specific with three issues.

We will explore the first two for today.

First of all, that we would know the hope of our calling.

God has called us out of darkness into his marvelous light and adopted us into His family. We have been called out of slavery and bondage to sin and been transferred into His kingdom.

There is great hope in knowing what we were before we were saved and what we are now. There is great hope to know this truth:

Romans 8:28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.

One of the ways that we can experientially and more intimately know our Father is by focusing on the hope we have as believers. We aren't defeated. We know the end of the story. We know the hope of our future. We know what God has in store for us. We know what God has done for us.

We have been born again and we have great hope since Christ was raised from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead,

We have hope because Christ has accepted us through His blood, and we stand not guilty.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. ² Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

2 Thessalonians 2:16-17 Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, ¹⁷ comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

Secondly, Paul prays that we would also know God more deeply and intimately as we focus on our future inheritance. Notice that Paul calls it the riches of our inheritance.

One of the ways that you can grow closer to God is by focusing on heaven. I have often heard this expression—his is so heavenly minded, that he is no earthly good. What people mean by this is that his heads are in the clouds. He's so focused on going to heaven that he is out of touch with this world and doesn't make a difference. I would argue just the opposite.

When our minds are focused on Christ as our prize, and the riches of our inheritance, and the hope we have in a solid future that is eternally secure, the greater the motivation it is for us to love others, and share the gospel, and grow in Christ and to make a difference in this world.

Spend time praying Ephesians 1:18 back to the Lord.

Day 20:

Ephesians 1:15-23

Yesterday we looked at the first two of Paul's requests. Let's examine the third.

Thirdly, Paul prays that we would have a deeper knowledge of God by experiencing this amazing immeasurable greatness of power. When Paul says "immeasurable greatness" this is the strongest way in the Greek language to bring out the amazing and overwhelming and abundant power of God for our lives.

The word Paul uses here for "working" or "worked" is where we get our word "energy"—it means to effectively work or put forth great effort. To exert force.

There are many evidences of God's power that we can think of, but overall, I think in the context of this prayer of Paul's—it is a passionate Christ-centeredness. God's power is on display when believers are passionately pursuing and making much of Jesus Christ as the center of the universe.

Think of all the things Paul could have used to describe God's power. He could have used the fact that God spoke the universe into existence by the power of His word, or the parting of the Red Sea, or Daniel in the lion's den, or the great flood in Noah's day, or the battle of Jericho or even the many miracles of Jesus. And all of those show God's power. But Paul's purpose is to show us that God's power most glorious is on display in Christ.

The first example of God's power is the resurrection. Think about the glory of the resurrection. When God raised Jesus from the dead, He was putting His powerful exclamation point on the fact that Christ's work was finished, and He powerfully raised Him from the dead.

And that power is available to you. That resurrection power is available to you. We want to know about God—yes—we want to be clearly informed by Scripture and have our theology straight and to have sound doctrine, but we also want to experientially know God and especially His power.

I've heard it said this way, "He was as straight as a gun barrel, but had not bullets." In other words, you can have all this great theology and have all this Bible knowledge and we as a church may have sound doctrine, but if there's no power of God it

doesn't matter. We need both. We need sound doctrine, but we also need the power of the Holy Spirit. And they fit hand in glove.

The more we know God through the Scriptures, the more the Holy Spirit is going to guide us in truth and glorify Christ, and the more we glorify Christ, the more we will experience His power in our lives and in our church.

Let me say this: There are a lot of movements out there that focus on power. Power encounters and all this type of stuff. But there is one guaranteed truth that God promises to show His power in a very amazing way—the gospel. When we focus on the gospel and glorify Jesus Christ and have Him as the center of our lives, that is where God promises to show His power.

Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

Spend time praising Jesus for the power of the resurrection.

Day 21:

Read Ephesians 1:15-23

The second illustration Paul uses of God’s power is in the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God. Not only did God show His power when He raised Christ from the dead, but He also showed His power when He seated His Son at His right hand.

There are two images here of being seated at the right hand of the Father. First of all, Jesus being seated means that He completed the work by dying on the cross and now it is finished. Secondly, the right hand was a symbol of being in a position of special honor.

So, when we focus on the finished work of Christ and keep our eyes on the resurrected Savior in heaven who is our one Mediator—then we experience God’s power, and we get to know Him more deeply.

The third example Paul uses is that Christ has been given absolute authority over the entire universe for the good of the church.

God’s power was on full display when He gave Christ the sovereign rule over all authorities and powers and dominions and put all things under His feet.

Philippians 2:9-11 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

David in Psalm 8 gives a prophecy about Jesus that Paul uses here:

Psalm 8:6 You have given him dominion over the works of your hands; you have put all things under his feet,

When we focus on the sovereign rule of Jesus over all things, we experience the power of God, and we get to know Him more fully.

But notice how this long sentence ends. Paul introduces us to the “church”. This is the very first time he uses this word in the letter, but this entire letter is focused on what it means to be the church. We find that Christ is the head of the church, and we are His body.

The church, His bride, is very special to Jesus. He is our head, and He fills us as the church. He is most pleased to glorify Himself in the church.

In today's world, there is much privatized Christianity. Me and Jesus over here in a little corner. I don't need a local church—I can experience God in the mountains or at the reservoir. I can watch Christian TV and that's my experience of church.

Let me gently say that the Bible knows no such thing as a privatized Christianity. From the very beginning, God has designed that His people live in community together as the gathered and assembled people of God. From the nation of Israel in the Old Testament to the church today.

Here's where it gets real practical. You can have experiential knowledge of God and grow deeply with Him through your personal quiet times. You can have a great time of personal Bible study and you can have your daily devotions and those are crucial to your spiritual growth, and you need to do those things.

But as important as those are, the most important thing you can do to grow closer to God is to gather with His people—the church—and grow in community. You will grow closer to God by being active in coming to worship service and being part of a growth group. If you want to experience the power of God in your life, it comes when you gather with other believers and live life together as the church.

So, Paul's primary prayer is that we would know God better and more intimately and more deeply. This comes through saturating ourselves with the Word of God and then spending quality time with Him in prayer and also through gathering together as the church in gospel community. And this knowing God better only comes through the Holy Spirit. And it is also something we must pray for.

Are you praying for this in your personal life? Are you praying this for your family? Are you praying this for our church? Are we praying like Paul that we would experience the power of God and know Him more deeply as we keep our eyes fixed on Christ?

I don't know about you, but I am not content to just know about God—I want to actually know Him. I want to know His power. I want to know Him so passionately and deeply. I want to know Him so much here on earth that by the time I get to heaven He's not a distant stranger.

May we have the passion of Paul whose burning desire was to know Christ more deeply.

May the Holy Spirit grant us the grace to have our eyes opened and our hearts enflamed to know the Father more deeply through the power of His Son.

Spend time praying Ephesians 1:15-23 back to the Lord.

Prayer Number SIX: A Prayer for Righteous Living

Day 22:

Read Philippians 1:9-11

In these passages, we see an actual prayer by Paul to the heavenly Father and he offers up two requests.

First of all, he prays that their love would abound. How does this love abound? With knowledge and discernment.

Is your love for others in our church family abounding more and more? Is your love for Jesus abounding more and more?

The more you grow in your knowledge of the Scriptures, the more you grow in your love for Jesus. The more you learn about Him, the more you love Him. There is a direct correlation between knowledge of Christ in the Scriptures and experiential love for Him in daily intimacy.

What if I told Dawn that I loved her and yet for the next 6 months, I lived in a hotel, never came home for dinner, didn't call her, and didn't ask about what was going on in her life. Would that be love?? Or a cause for us to get some serious marriage counseling!

The more I know about Dawn, the more my love for her grows!

It is the same with our Savior. The more you grow in your knowledge and discernment of Him as revealed in the Bible, the more your love will abound and grow.

Now, Paul's second request in this prayer is that they would demonstrate the fruit of a righteous life.

It's interesting that Paul uses the term "fruit". What is the "fruit" of righteousness that comes through Christ?

Read Galatians 5:22-23

Is this your prayer for yourself and your brothers and sisters in Christ at Emmanuel?

Do you pray that the Holy Spirit would produce His fruit in your life so that you would overflow with Christ's love to everyone around you?

Do you pray for holiness and integrity in your life that flows from your intimacy with Christ?

Notice how at the end of verse 11 these requests and thanksgiving are all summed in wanting to bring glory to God. What is the chief end of man? To glorify God by enjoying Him forever.

Everything we do in life has the aim to glorify God.

Spend time praying Philippians 1:9-11 back to the Lord.

PRAYER Number SEVEN: A Prayer for Fruit Bearing

Day 23:

Read Colossians 1:3-6

Many times, when we think of the gospel, we only think of it as the information a lost person needs to be saved. We see it as the entry requirements for the Christian life. Instead, the gospel is not just the diving board that gets into Christ, but it is the entire pool itself. As believers, we need to hear the gospel preached every week to us. We need to remind ourselves of it every day.

Paul is writing to those who are already Christians and reminds them that the gospel is bearing fruit and growing in their lives (**vv 5-6**).

There is a great book of prayers by the Puritans called “*Valley of Vision*”—they are powerful, deep, and very moving. I encourage you to find this book and meditate on the prayers. Listen to one of the prayers: “Holy Trinity, continue to teach me that Christ’s righteousness satisfies justice and evidences your love; help me to make use of it by faith as the ground of my peace and of your favor and acceptance of me, so *that I may live always near the cross.*”

That’s what we want to do. To always live near the cross by faith so that the gospel permeates our thinking, and it affects every aspect of our lives.

Milton Vincent in his book “*A Gospel Primer for Christians*” writes these very encouraging words: “There is simply no other way to compete with the forebodings of my conscience, the condemning of my heart, and the lies of the world and the devil than to overwhelm such things with daily rehearsings of the gospel.”

That’s what we need. A daily rehearsing of the gospel in our hearts and minds. We need to be saturated in the gospel so that we can overwhelm the temptations of this world with the glory and majesty of Christ.

Read Colossians 1:9-13

This is Paul’s actual prayer.

His ultimate request is that we would so be filled with the knowledge of God that we would walk in a worthy manner that pleases God and bears fruit.

John 15:5 ⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Here's the issue: The more we abide in Christ through prayer, His Word, and active obedience, the more we bear fruit. Bearing fruit becomes the by-product or outflow of abiding in Him.

This fruit bearing can either be seeing more people come to Christ or it can be stronger and more consistent evidence of the fruit of the Spirit in our lives.

Either way, we need to pray for God's power to bear fruit. We need to pray for God's power to walk in a worthy manner that pleases Him. We need to spend time abiding in Christ so that we can bear much fruit to His glory.

Spend time in prayer asking God to imbed the gospel deeply into your heart so that you can bear fruit for His glory.

Day 24:

Read Colossians 1:9-14

Yesterday we focused on Paul's prayer request that we would bear fruit in a lifestyle that is pleasing to God.

In **verse 11**, he also prays that we would joyfully endure living a fruit bearing life through God's power as we live in this sinful world.

Many times, in our Christian walk, we are tempted to give up. We tend to get tired, discouraged, and feel very weak. We need God's power to endure and not just to grin and bear it, but to endure with JOY!

We can pray for joyful endurance. God often answers this prayer by providing another believer to come along side of us to encourage us in this marathon.

The writer of Hebrews addresses this issue of endurance.

Hebrews 12:12–13 Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³ and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed.

Are your hands drooping today? Are you weak in the knees? Are you stumbling along in your Christian walk?

The stresses of life, the temptations of sin, and the arrows of the enemy sometimes all come at once and leave us vulnerable, weak, and joyless.

We desperately need to pray for God to strengthen us with His power so we can run the race with joyful endurance.

What is the basis for this joyful endurance?

Paul tells us in verse 13. We have been delivered from the domain of darkness and now have complete forgiveness of sins in Christ's kingdom.

That is the glorious beauty of the gospel. Think about who you were before God rescued you. You were living in the domain of darkness. You were dead in your sins. You were blinded to Christ. You were an enemy of God. In sum, you were hopeless,

helpless, and hell-bound. But God in His infinite mercy, delivered you from that existence.

He transferred you into His Kingdom. He has completely forgiven all your sins by Christ's finished work on the cross.

Spend time in prayer asking God to grant you joyful endurance as you thank Him for rescuing you out of darkness and forgiving all your sin.

Prayer Number SEVEN: A Prayer for Love, Purity, and Patience

Day 25:

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Look at the intensity of Paul's praying. He prays earnestly and he prays both night and day. It is not some token prayer he throws up to God, but he is truly wrestling in prayer for these believers to grow.

As a matter of fact, verses 11-13 are the actual recorded prayer of Paul. This is his prayer request for them.

Are others praying for your growth? Are you praying for others? Do you have a prayer partner who you know has your back?

James 5:16 ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

Now as we look at Paul's specific prayer in verses 11-13, we see two things that you and I need to remain steadfast in our faith.

You need to INCREASE and ABOUND in love.

Verse 12 addresses this. Paul prays that the Lord would make them increase and abound in love for one another and for all.

Now what's amazing is that Paul has already praised them for their increase in love and for them demonstrating this. But he prays that they would even be more loving.

The word "increase" means to be poured out abundantly to the point of overflowing. The word "abound" means superabundance or more than enough. So, when he uses these two terms together, he is praying that they would have the greatest, most abounding, overflowing love possible for each other and for the lost.

How do you remain firm in your faith? You stop focusing on yourself and you begin to live selfless and to love others.

And notice that this love was not something that they could produce in and of themselves. God had to produce it in them, and He had to be the source of its overflowing.

Are you praying that you would love others more deeply? Are you demonstrating love by more than just mere words, but in action?

Spend time in prayer asking God to make your love increase and abound for others. Pray that God would lead you to SPECIFIC ways you can show love to others.

Day 26:

1 Thessalonians 3:9-13

Yesterday, we saw Paul's request that they would increase and abound in love. As we continue through his prayer, we see another request.

The need to have pure hearts and godly lives as you wait patiently for the Second Coming of Christ.

Paul's final prayer request is that their hearts would be established blameless in holiness at the coming of Christ.

In other words, the way you remain steadfast in your faith is through holy living. You live a godly lifestyle of purity.

Blameless doesn't mean that you're perfect, but it does mean that your life is one of overall integrity. That you are living separate and distinct from the world as set apart to God.

1 Peter 1:14–16¹⁴ As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, ¹⁵ but as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, ¹⁶ since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

Let's root all of this in God's power and grace. You and I can't produce this holiness. That is why Paul is praying that God would do it. That God would establish their hearts. That God would work in them holiness and love. That God would mature them to be able to stand fast.

God alone is the chief source of this transformation and help. He alone is the only one who can truly strengthen you, but here's the difficult truth: He often uses others as instruments in His hands to meet your needs.

You've probably heard this story before about this guy who had fallen off a cliff and was hanging by a thread on a tree branch. He prayed desperately that God would save him and get him out of this predicament. So, a person called from above and offered him a rope. The guy refused saying that he was trusting in God to save him.

And then a helicopter passed overhead with a rescue team ready to send down a ladder and the man yelled up to them that he was waiting for God to save Him. Well, he fell off the tree limb and landed in the raging water below and he had a few bruises

but was still alive. He found a piece of driftwood and held on for dear life. A group of guys in a raft came by and offered to pull him out with their oar and he refused because he said he was trusting in God to save him.

The guy finally drowns and went to heaven. And when he got to the pearly gates, he was pretty upset and so he just unloaded on Peter. He said, “Listen, I was praying to God, and I was trusting in God, and I put all my hope in God to save me and look what happened—I drowned and now I’m here before my time!” Peter just smiled and said, “God did promise to save you. He sent you a rope, a ladder, an oar, and yet your refused to receive His help.” The guy finally got it.

Yes, God is sovereign and powerful and can work wonders in your life, but here’s the amazing thing about it. Oftentimes, he uses others to be the instrument of His growth in your life.

This could be a pastor, a friend, a mentor, a teacher, a coach, a spouse, a parent. Stop and think for a moment and see how God has used others to help you stay strong in your faith.

Spend time in praying 1 Thessalonians 3:9-13 back to the Lord.

Prayer Number EIGHT: A Prayer for God's Equipping

Day 27:

Read Hebrews 13:20-2

This is called a “Benediction”—a closing prayer that concludes the book of Hebrews.

The main request is that God would equip you with everything you need to do please Him by doing His will.

But before we get to the actual request, look at the deep theology the writer focuses upon as the basis for this equipping.

In verse 20, we observe **FOUR great truths:**

➤ **God is a God of peace—**

The way this is constructed in the original language conveys that God GIVES us peace. This is not some “peaceful, easy feeling”, but an objective peace that comes through salvation.

Before salvation, we were enemies of God and through the cross, Christ has reconciled us to the Father, thus granting us peace with Him .

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:13–14 ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. ¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made us both one and has broken down in his flesh the dividing wall of hostility

➤ **God raised Jesus from the dead.** The basis for this request is the resurrection of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:17 ¹⁷ And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins.

➤ **Jesus is our Great Shepherd**

John 10:14–15 I am the good shepherd. I know my own and my own know me, ¹⁵ just as the Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep.

➤ **Jesus shed His blood as the Mediator of the New Covenant**

Hebrews 7:22 This makes Jesus the guarantor of a better covenant.

Ephesians 1:7 ⁷ In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,

Spend time PRAISING God for these four truths:

- He has brought us peace
- He has raised Jesus from the dead
- Christ in our Good Shepherd
- We have forgiveness through the shed blood of Christ.

Day 28:

Read Hebrews 13:20-21

Yesterday we explored four theological truths that serve as the basis for the prayer.

For today, let's examine the request in verse 21.

The request is that God would **EQUIP** you with everything good for doing His will.

God promises to equip us with everything we need. We are not left to our own devices to try and figure things out. We are never called to live the Christian life in the power of our own flesh.

One of the primary ways God equips us is through godly pastors and leaders whom Christ has called to help believers grow into maturity.

Ephesians 4:11–13 ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, ¹² to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,

Paul uses the same word “*equip*” here that the writer of Hebrews uses in verse 21.

New Testament scholar Harold Hoehner claims,

Before NT times, the term ‘*equip*’ was rare and used in medical practices of setting a limb or bone or the restoration of a shoulder. In NT times, it is used of furnishing a room or preparation of a garment. . . . It appears thirteen times in the NT and can mean ‘to restore or mend’ fishing nets, to ‘restore’ a fallen brother, to ‘prepare,’ ‘to put into order, complete, furnish,’ ‘to perfect,’ or ‘instruct.’ Returning to the noun in the present context, it ‘refers to the preparation of the church for becoming perfect.’ This preparation includes instructing and equipping believers so that they can minister effectively in the church.⁴

God equips us by working in us to do His will.

⁴Harold W. Hoehner, *Ephesians*, Baker Exegetical Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2002), 549-50.

Philippians 2:12–13 ¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

This is a great parallel verse because it speaks of doing God's will in obedience (v 12) but only through the empowering and enabling of God to work in us (v 13).

The beauty of this prayer request is that God WORKS in us so that we will please Him in obedience to His will. God will give us the power of His Spirit to do obey.

We are not only saved by sovereign grace at our initial salvation, but we are sustained by sovereign grace as we continue to live the Christian life.

Spend time asking God to equip you with everything you need to do His will. Thank Him that He works in you both the desire and ability to please Him in obedience.

PRAYER NUMBER NINE: A PRAYER FOR GLOBAL MISSIONS

Day 29:

Read Romans 15:30-33

The book of Romans is Paul's greatest theological treatise, but it is also a missionary letter.

Let me give you some background to the writing of Romans. Paul has given his life to planting churches and doing missions and training up disciples in Jerusalem and Illyricum. You may not know the scope of this, but geographically this is a big arc that starts in Jerusalem, moves up to Syria Antioch, then to Asia Minor and then over to Macedonia. This is a large area. But Paul really wants to go to Spain.

Spain is the final frontier for him. It is a pagan unreached people group. He desires to stop in Rome on his way to Spain and meet this church that he's never met and to encourage them. Many scholars believe that the book of Romans is a letter that explains his missionary heartbeat as way to get support from this important church in Rome.

The actual recorded prayer is in Romans 15:30-33, but the background to the prayer comes in Romans 15:14-29 where he explains his ministry to the Gentiles.

Read Romans 15:18-24

Notice what Paul says that is so amazing. **He had finished the task**

He says that he has fulfilled the ministry of the gospel and finished the work in those regions and has no more places to share or no work anymore in these areas.

This is staggering. No more work? Paul finished the task in that area? How can Paul say the gospel is fulfilled in a region where there were probably tens of thousands of unconverted people? It was humanly impossible for Paul to witness to every single person in those regions. How can he say he was finished?

One of the greatest scholars who has written a commentary on Romans is Cranfield and he says this, *"This does not mean that he had evangelized everyone in the area indicated but that he had completed his 'trail-blazing, pioneer preaching' of the gospel that he believed was his own special apostolic ministry."*

It was in the nature of his task. His task was not necessarily evangelism, but frontier missions. Paul had finished the missionary task in Jerusalem and Illyricum—he had reached peoples, planted churches, raised up disciples and was finished.

What is frontier missions? Paul defines it for us.

He says that he makes it his ambition **to preach the gospel where Christ has not been named**, lest he build on someone else's foundation. Frontier missions is going into a people group who have never heard of Jesus or the gospel. It is going into a people group for the first time. Where there has been no missionary presence. Where there are no Christians. Where there are no evangelical churches. Like Spain for Paul.

I strongly believe that for the Great Commission to be completed, we must have serious minded people who are obedient to God's call to go risk everything and be like a Paul and go to places and peoples where Christ has not been named. And this most definitely means hostile Islamic and Hindu peoples living in darkness—like India and Pakistan.

Can you conceive of that? That there are people right now in the world who have never heard the name Jesus nor have ever read a Bible?

According to the *Joshua Project*⁵ there are 17,409 people groups in the world. A people group is a group of people who share the same ethnicity, language, and culture. There are 7.84 billion people in the world today.

Currently there are 7400 unreached people groups which make up 3.2 billion people and 42% of the world's population.

Can you fathom this reality! Over 3 billion people have never heard the gospel or even know who Jesus is. They are living in darkness with no exposure to the privileges and blessings we have here in America.

Paul quotes **Isaiah 25:15**

There is a blindness and darkness among the unreached peoples of the world, but through God's grace and the presence of a frontier missionary, they will see and understand Him of who they had not known before.

⁵https://joshuaproject.net/people_groups/statistics

Paul's goal in being a frontier missionary to unreached peoples where Christ had not been named was so the peoples would glorify and praise God for His mercy in Jesus Christ.

Spend time praying for unreached people groups especially in India and Pakistan who desperately need the gospel.

Day 30:

Read Romans 15:32

What is the role of Emmanuel in aiding frontier missionaries?

What was Paul's desire when he went to Rome on his way to Spain? Remember Spain was an unreached people area. What did Paul want to experience from the church in Rome that would encourage him before he launched out as a pioneer missionary to the last frontier of Spain?

Paul wants to come to them and be refreshed in their company. Paul wants to come with joy.

How are we as a local church—Emmanuel Baptist Church—fulfilling this for frontier missionaries around the globe. To be an encouraging source of joy and refreshing?

Are we helping them to experience joy in Christ and are we being a refreshment to them?

Are we being faithful in praying for missionaries to refresh them?

Are we giving to missions to refresh them?

Are we assisting them on short term trips to add to their joy and refresh them?

Paul's goal in doing mission work was not just to get decisions. It wasn't to have a big crusade and have all these people come forward for an emotional experience and then there be no lasting fruit.

True missions is about planting vibrant, healthy Biblical churches with solid leadership who are actually making disciples.

The result of missions: Notice what he says in **verse 18**—Christ has accomplished through Paul in the Gentiles—obedience by word and deed.

This is the ultimate goal of missions. This is what it means to make disciples. Believers who love Jesus and live under His Lordship in both word and deed. Obedient disciples.

We often don't think about the true meaning of the Great Commission. We are called to make disciples, but what specifically are we to do? Teach them? That's only half of it—we are to teach them to OBEY!!!

The task is not completed until sinners come to faith in Christ, grow in Him, and are living a consistent lifestyle of obedience to Jesus as Lord.

Who is the power behind missions? The power of the Spirit. It is by God's power. It is a supernatural work wrought in us by the power and grace of the Holy Spirit.

May God raise up missionaries from Emmanuel who say with great passion and great intensity that they will go risk all where Christ has not been named. May we as a church have a passion to see Christ named where He has not been named.

Let us be active, bold, and diligent in obedience to God in His plan to glorify Christ among the nations.

Spend time in prayer that we would be source of refreshing to our missionaries and that the gospel would advance by the power of the Holy Spirit to make obedient disciples.

Postscript:

How have you grown in prayer over the past 30 days? How has this experience deepened your faith in Christ? How has God been faithful in answering your prayers? Do you have a bigger view of our Sovereign Savior because of praying with focus over the past 30 days?

Spend some time reflecting on what you've learned and seen through this 30 Day Prayer Journey.