

**Ephesians 1:15-18**  
**A Prayer for Knowledge**

This morning as we return to Ephesians 1, we transition here out of the doxology of praise that we've been going through in verses 3-14, we move into verse 15 to talk about the concept of prayer. Prayer, hopefully a discipline, a practice that you're familiar with, as you sit here this morning, as you consider your own life with Christ, as you consider our corporate, working together as a body, as you consider what we're doing as a church, hopefully prayer is definitely involved in that picture of how you think a Christian ought to live, and how a church ought to function, and the focus that we should have.

In fact, it's clear if you just think about the practicality of what we do as a church, we often are praying as we begin certain ministries and tasks, we actually will, in the midst of those certain ministries and tasks, we will pray in the middle of them and then we'll come out on the other side and pray some more, something that we actually have in there, we'll have small group times within our Growth Group Bible studies that many of you are a part of, where we're actually spending time where we can pray with one another and pray for one another, we even give each other information of how we can continue to pray for one another when we leave that place and actually go out from there, whenever we meet together, and then hopefully there's a reality of your own personal relationship with God that is overflowing, and just a normal frequency for you of praying and communicating with God.

Of those spiritual disciplines and practices of one who is a follower of Jesus Christ, prayer is essential, prayer is vital. Of a church that's going to claim to be God's people, that's going to represent Christ to the world, prayer is essential, prayer is vital. And yet there's something about prayer, isn't there, that's so almost..mysterious..there's something about prayer that - it has its intimacy, but it's also a little ethereal, it's a little beyond us and it's not as black and white, at times it might seem. For instance, when we do pray, when we do talk to God and when we do pray for one another, what are we praying? What are we asking? What are we actually communicating, what

types of things are we actually praying, what are we saying, what is the content of that prayer?

Getting into the details of prayer is actually quite interesting and is something that maybe isn't always discussed among us. But we praise God for giving us His Word and revealing models and examples that show us how to live our life including this reality of a praying individual and a praying church. We come back and we see Paul give us that example of prayer, and that's what we're going to find, we're not going to be able to cover the entire prayer this time, but we will get into this prayer that begins in verse 15. And if we're honest, if we look at it, he's really been praying since verse 3, right? We look back at verse 3 and we're reminded of the entire tone of this doxology that he launched into, it was all praise and adoration unto God, and that is prayer, is it not? Is it not communicating to God, adoring Him for who He is, praising Him for what He's done? Paul is praying. Paul is praying, he's already been modeling for us a wonderful aspect of communicating to God that which is true about God, that which actually does please God when we do this.

But now we move into what gets to be the more practical outworkings of that, and specifically when we're praying for one another. No doubt the phrase is offered often, particularly on a Sunday morning like today, "I'll be praying for you." Or, "I've been praying for you." Hopefully that's a normal phrase, hopefully that's a normal thing, and hopefully we're not lying when we say that. That's an easy trap to fall into, at church "I'll be praying for you." Wait...did I mean that? Am I actually going to do that? Or is that my goodbye? Hopefully that's an actual commitment we've made when we say we're praying for people, and then we take it the next step further. Well, what are we praying exactly? What are we saying? Paul helps us, and that's what we're going to look at this morning.

Let's look at Ephesians 1, we'll read verse 15, and we'll go into the beginning of verse 19 a little bit. Ephesians 1, verse 15, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, 16 I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my

prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom, and of revelation in the knowledge of him. 18 Having the eyes of your hearts enlightened that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe." We will just stop there to be able to cover some major elements of prayer as Paul has modeled and laid out for us, because we appreciate a model, we need a model, and this is very clear when it comes to this essential and vital practice of prayer.

In verse 15, as we begin looking at our text this morning, Paul gives us a very clear understanding of the grounds for which he actually begins to pray. What is the springboard by which he launches into praying? What is the foundation upon which he has felt sufficient strength to be able to approach God in prayer? Verse 15 reads, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love toward all the saints"...and then we get into verse 16 where he says, "I'm praying. I'm thanking God for you." He gives, it really appears to be in verse 15, three essential grounds for prayer, that we can just understand, and learn, and apply directly, as we move through this text. This is a great text to not just learn how Paul's praying, but immediately and directly input that into the way that we're living, the way that we're praying.

Paul gives three grounds for prayer just in verse 15. First, the spiritual blessings of our salvation provided grounds for Paul's prayer. The very reality of where we come from. Think about what we've just been talking about in verses 3 through 14. We've mentioned it as this doxology, this praise unto God, and why was that again? As verse 3 states clearly, "because God has blessed us, in Christ, with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places." Because of our great salvation, because of the riches and the glories of God's grace that have been lavished upon us. Paul is just looking back at everything he has just said. Because of all this wonderful truth about who God is, and what He has done for us, I launch to pray. Because of the eternal past work of God in choosing us for salvation, because of the present work of God through Christ in redeeming and forgiving us, because of the future

we're guaranteed by the Spirit of God for our inheritance, because of the glories of past, present and future realities of salvation, because of this, I pray. And it's worth noting very clearly.

Do you struggle, do you have a hard time praying? Perhaps you just need to get back into recognizing the glories of our salvation, the wonders of what God has done, and who He is. That is sufficient enough to launch us into communicating with God. As Paul has said, we've been chosen, we've been adopted, we've been redeemed, we've been forgiven, we have insight made known to us, we've been inherited as His own, we've been sealed, and guaranteed for the day of redemption. Those are sufficient reasons to launch us up towards God, towards the throne of grace, where we communicate to Him, if for nothing else than for the sake of praising Him, and bringing glory to Him.

But that's not the only grounds, secondly we see the fate of the Ephesians provides grounds for Paul's prayer, as he clearly goes on to say in verse 15, "For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus." Paul, as he was going about on his missionary journeys, planting churches, establishing these local churches, and groups that were growing and flourishing, even in the midst of their persecution, Paul would get reports from these churches on how they were doing, and how they were actually living out and understanding the teaching the Apostles had left them. And while he is in prison, he gets more reports, he gets visitations, and so he hears, not just seeing from his own experience, he hears that they continue, that they have faith in the Lord Jesus.

The Ephesians are joined with Paul, as those who are so blessed to have these spiritual blessings overflowing in their life, as those who have been lavished with the glorious grace of God. The Ephesians responded to the Word of truth, the Gospel of salvation; they responded in faith, they believed that good news, they received the indwelling Holy Spirit. And Paul can simply rejoice in that fact. They are saved, they are God's own, and he can be moved to pray just on that alone.

And of course, even that isn't the only thing; third, the love of the Ephesians

for fellow believers provides a grounds for Paul to launch into prayer here. The Gospel message, the response of faith, and then the actual display of that faith, the manifestation of that. Vertically, they have come to have peace with God as they believe in Christ; and now horizontally, they live it out. They actually move toward one another in love, they actually express that love, and that moves Paul to pray.

So we ask ourselves, "How's my prayer life?" How's your prayer life? Is this something you struggle with? Often times people have excused the realities of, and the need, the essential vitality of drawing near to God in prayer. They say "It's too difficult, it takes too much time, I don't know when I can pray, I'm not sure what to pray for, I'm not even sure how to pray." And excuses come in, and then we find ourselves dropping the habit, or maybe never even establishing the habit of prayer. Well Paul has just given three obvious grounds for cultivating our prayer lives. He's given us three obvious reasons that we should be praying people, very clearly.

Do you struggle to pray? Then clearly, God's glorious grace toward you in salvation is unimpressive. If this is a struggle for you to pray and communicate with God, then go back to verses 3 to 14, and be amazed. If that doesn't move you to pray, then it's very likely that you have not experienced the grace of God in your life to save you in the first place. Because after all, what does a believer do? They come into being when they call out to God and respond in faith, an act by which is prayer, when we come to God and are born again.

Thirdly, do you struggle to pray? Then obviously, faith in Jesus Christ, professed by those in this very room, has not captured your attention. The very thought of one another, the very thought of Valley Bible Church, the very thought of each other ought to move us to pray. Just knowing there are others who share in this glorious salvation, knowing that there are others who are working to live it out, we ought to be moved to pray just on that alone.

Do you struggle to pray? Then certainly, you have missed the constant display of love that believers in this body are showing to one another. I hope

that's evident, I hope that's obvious, I hope you've been the recipient of that - you've felt the love from one another in this body, and I hope you've even participated yourself in giving out that love toward one another. When we do so, all these things move us to pray, they ought to.

These are sufficient grounds for prayer, they worked for Paul, as we look at his model, the glories of our salvation, the fact that it was received by believers, the fact that it was lived out among one another, all those moved Paul to pray in verse 16, and that's what we move to see next, in verse 16, the gratitude in prayer. In verse 16 we read, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers."

As Paul moves to discuss the details of his prayer life, we learn a few more aspects about prayer, we learn some more details, we look to the model. Of course we could look elsewhere in the New Testament, we find more examples from Paul and the other Apostles, we find examples from Jesus, but what we have before us is in Ephesians, and we see this model from Paul, and we learn a few things even about prayer just from what he says.

First, and very obvious hopefully for you to recognize, prayer is frequent. Prayer is a frequent practice, it is a regular thing. Paul says, "I do not cease to give thanks for you." You remember elsewhere, where Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5:17, the very obvious injunction and command, "Pray without ceasing." Prayer is vital, we're commanded to do so, this is who we are. This is the natural outworking of being a follower of Jesus Christ. You pray, you talk to God, you will do this, it's a frequent thing for you. It has been illustrated, and was even recognized by Martin Luther, "To be a Christian without prayer, is no more possible than to be alive without breathing." Breathing is a great example, breathing - that regular essential and vital practice to be alive as a human - so too for those that are following Christ, for Paul, for the Ephesian church, for you and I, that we are a people that are praying on a frequent basis.

It's not a single moment or action, it's not like checking in with a superior at work and having your performance review where you check in once a quarter and say, "Everything's fine, good, I'll see you next quarter, I'll see

you next year." That's not prayer. Prayer is not some formality, this hoop you jump through to say, "And check - done with prayer." "I showed up on a Sunday and there was prayer." "We prayed before we ate the meal." That's not what we're talking about, that's not what the Bible describes as prayer. Prayer should be interwoven into all of our activities and conversations and planning. There is not an area of life where the practice of prayer is exempt, not a single area that can be exempt from prayer. In fact, prayer ought to be proactive, instinctual, second nature, and even reactive. No matter what you're going through, there is prayer all throughout.

The reality of what is coming up and anticipating, and so you proactively pray in regard to who you might talk to today, in the realities of what you have on your schedule and agenda, you pray in advance for those things. When you're in the midst of those conversations as you talk with each other this morning, and as you go out from this place, in these interactions, you're praying, while you're talking to one another. "How can I? Lord, help me to encourage this person right now. Lord, help me to legitimately do everything I can to serve them in this topic, in this conversation, in this brief interaction." And then as you walk away from the conversation, you don't walk away saying, "Good talk, good talk." You keep praying, and you keep asking God, "Help me. Help me to see what I can do more to minister to that person in light of what I now know after such a conversation."

You see, prayer is just laced throughout everything we do as a believer. Prayer is not spiritual medication for the believer to consume as needed, something that is utilized on hard days and forgotten on good days. No, that's not prayer. That's not Paul's model of prayer, that's not the Biblical prescription for prayer, it is a frequent thing, like breathing. Secondly, we see, just even from our verse here, that prayer contains gratitude. Verse 16 goes on to say, he says, "I do not cease to give thanks for you." There is gratitude in prayer, we have already acknowledged the adoration and the praise in prayer, as he has been doing in verses 3 to 14, but as we go into this, we see thanksgiving very clearly, thanksgiving and gratitude. "I do not cease to give thanks for you." Not only does Paul have a regularly consistent prayer life, but Paul's prayer life regularly and consistently incorporates

being thankful, showing gratitude.

Prayer can't be limited to the level of request and petition, in fact so many people see it as such, though. Prayer is some type of you talking to a genie, you approaching a vending machine and pushing a button and hoping that something comes out in return. That's not what prayer is limited to, prayer is much more. It is gratitude, it is thankfulness, prayer must be opened up to include our gratitude toward God. Otherwise, we're simply asking and demanding from God without recognizing a constant stream of His goodness that is flowing into our life.

One of the wonderful things of prayer, it is that response, it is that act of worship by which we turn to God and we acknowledge what He is just lavishing upon us currently in our life. We have the ability to turn toward Him at any moment, in any given day, and say, "Thank you for this blessing that I recognize, that is clearly coming from Your hand." Prayer is an opportunity to show that gratitude, to be thankful unto God, for all the goodness that He showers upon us.

And third, as Paul is making known in this example of prayer in Ephesians 1, we see prayer is focused on others. We see other times, where there is a clear and obvious time where we need to be praying in our own spiritual battle and trying to pursue holiness and righteousness. In our example in Ephesians 1, Paul is focused on others in his prayer. He adds the statement, not only does he "not cease giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers." He remembers the Ephesians. Throughout his writings, Paul models a persistent practice of prayer for others. This is maturity, this is leadership, and it's more than just having fond thoughts of someone, it's more than just reminiscing on good old times with certain individuals - that's not it.

Paul took his relationships to the believers and all the churches to the next level by remembering them in prayer. And you have to realize, this was not only in relationship to whether or not that church was struggling. Paul didn't hear good reports of certain churches and go, "Whew, good, another church I don't have to worry about, otherwise there's so many churches to pray for,



this is just too much for me." That's not the case. It didn't matter where the church was at, how bad they were struggling, or how well they were thriving; Paul was committed to remembering them in prayer, he was focused on others.

It reminds us of Samuel's leadership with the nation of Israel. Even when the nation ignored Samuel's advice and command about not getting a king, and it did not go well, Samuel still says very clearly in 1 Samuel 12:23, "As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by ceasing to pray for you." Yeah, you guys blew it. Samuel's saying, "Of course you guys blew it, and you did not recognize God as your king as you ought to have, but I will not, as your leader, I will not stop praying for you."

This is what prayer ought to do, continue to be poured out for one another, it doesn't stop at some point, we continue to pray for each other. It's one of the most obvious, and necessary, and practical ways that we're ministering to one another. Of course we can't be with each other 24/7 and walk through the week and then come into this place, but a very obvious way we can minister to one another is in our prayers that we're constantly giving for one another.

So how about you? Are you in the habit of praying? Does prayer permeate your everyday life? Does prayer clothe your conversations with people? Are you in prayer leading up to that conversation with a particular person, are you in prayer in the midst of the conversation, are you in prayer after and you recap the conversation? Does prayer clothe your agenda for a given day, if you know that you are going to be accomplishing certain tasks and responsibilities? Are you in prayer leading up to that task, leading up to that responsibility that's before you? In the midst of that, even if it's no fun at all, do you continue to come back to God in prayer? And afterward, when you've finished, do you reflect and give thanks and praise to God for the fact that you even got through the responsibility? And even if it went terribly, do you come back to God as you ought to?

To have the right attitude and to recognize His rule and reign over all details; in a single day, it's easy to see, we have several opportunities to pray. We

can be praying people. We can be, we ought to be praying people, but we have to start by recognizing, is prayer permeating our everyday life, or is it boxed up? Is it limited? Is it compartmentalized into certain segments, and that's it? We need to be praying people. Paul gives us a great model of one who is not just having a good springboard and launching point for prayer, and a good practice and regular habit of prayer, but we get to the content. We see, how is it that Paul will pray for a church? How is it that Paul will pray for another believer? Because that's what we want to know.

Some of you are hopefully in this practice of prayer already, and you have plenty of things to pray for, and you're excited to do that. But how are you praying for each other? How are we at Valley Bible going to be praying for one another? That's important, that's important to know. Because we throw it out there a lot, but this is so personal between you and God. What are you saying to God? How are you praying for one another? Paul tells us in verse 17, we see the gift in prayer.

We read, going on and seeing the end of verse 16, where he says, "Remembering you in my prayers, 17 that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him." When it comes to these details of how to pray for others, this is a model, verse 17. First, notice very clearly, that prayer acknowledges God as the gift giver, prayer looks to God, the one true God, who alone is the One able to accomplish anything that we bring to Him in prayer. Paul prays to the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, very clear.

And it's obvious that prayer must be offered to God. We're not offering some prayer to a "force up above". We're not offering prayer to some generic god that might exist. Paul is specific, he's praying to the one true God, who has revealed the promised Messiah, His Son, Jesus. It is exclusive, no one else is able to save, no one else is able to answer prayer from mankind. Paul prays to the One who can and will do far more abundantly than all we ask or think, as he will go on to say in chapter 3. It is only through Christ that we have peace with God the Father, and prayer demonstrates that it's only through Christ that we have access to God the Father.

It's a necessary first step, and I just want to offer that encouragement today for anyone that is here, that does not know Christ. Let me encourage you, if you have not trusted all of yourself to Jesus, then you are still in your sins, and you're without hope. You are without hope when you stand before God on Judgment Day - scary place to be. I plead with you, make Jesus and His death on the cross, make that your hope. Make that your only source of hope in this life. That is the proper preparation for the life to come - trusting in Christ, not ourselves. When you entrust your life to Jesus, not only will you have confidence at His return, assurance of salvation, ready to be in His presence, but you will have access to God. You will have the ability to communicate to God, because it is no longer on you, it is through Christ alone that you are saved, it is through Christ alone that you can approach God, and actually communicate.

Paul makes that clear, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may He be the One granting this request, may He be the One that offers and gives this gift. This is what we learn in the rest of the verse, we learn the content of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians and others; a wonderful opportunity for us to discover how to pray for others.

What has been the focus, what has been the thrust of Paul's prayer for the Ephesians? He's been constantly doing this, he "doesn't cease," he says, he continues to pray for the Ephesians. What topics? What themes? What has been going through Paul's mind? What has been on Paul's lips? What words has he been uttering as he prays for the Ephesians? Is he praying for physical safety for the Ephesian church? You might think, "Well that sounds kind of legit." Back in Acts 19 there was a riot in Ephesus, it was jeopardizing the safety of the church and those that were associated with Paul. You might think, "Maybe the physical health of the Ephesian church - is that what he's praying for? Maybe the physical wealth and success of the Ephesian church, their ability to grow in numbers and to see their church become bigger and bigger in size."

Well, you don't need to legitimately wait for my answer to those questions, you can just look down at the text, you're all smart enough to see the passage

and see what it is, what has Paul been praying for the Ephesians when he remembers them. It's clear - he prays that they might have wisdom, revelation, and knowledge of God. Wisdom, revelation and knowledge of God - this just blows me away. What a difference compared to what I would say, and I would argue, is some of the most common prayer requests in the American church today.

If one were to compare the most common prayer requests of the American church with the regular prayers of Paul - not just this one, just go to the other ones as well - and look at what Paul prays throughout the New Testament, you would see we have a massive disconnect. If we could bring Paul here, and he could hear what are the top ten prayer requests, or the ways that Christians in the American church are "praying" for each other, asking for prayer, Paul would just be shocked. I think he would see a massive disconnect. Why? You think, "This is interesting, where are you going with this?" Well, the American church, I think you could agree, has fixated upon physical health, physical safety, success; those are the things that are often uttered as, "Pray for this" and "Please be of mind of this" and "If you think about it, think about this" and "Pray for me in regards to these things." "I want to be healthy, I want to be safe, I want to have that promotion, I want success." And this is how we ask for prayer, this is how, often, people in the American church are praying for one another.

We need this model from Paul this morning. What a difference, what an absolute difference, a stunning disconnect when Paul says, he is praying for these Ephesians while he himself is in jail for being a Christian, he is praying for them that they would know God more. That they would have wisdom and revelation and knowledge of God, having the eyes of their hearts enlightened. This is stunning, this is the need, this is how we need prayer for ourselves, this is how we pray for one another, we need this, that we would grow in our knowledge of God.

And to be clear, looking at this, Paul's not praying that God gives the Ephesians the Holy Spirit, because he knows they already have the Holy Spirit. He's already stated that in verses 13 and 14, when they did hear the

message and believed the truth, they received the Holy Spirit. Instead, Paul is praying that the Holy Spirit who indwells the Ephesians might increase their wisdom, increase their revelation, increase their knowledge of God. As one commentator states, "Rather, he means that the Spirit who was already within them will fill every part of their being, and enlighten them more fully in the truths of God." Yes, they have some level of knowledge, they have been enlightened to some degree because they heard the Gospel and they believed it. But Paul says, "But I want more for you. I want more than you just to be saved. I want more than you just to know about Christ and His saving blood offered for you. I want you to grow, I want you to expand on that enlightenment, I want you to know the glories of who our God is."

You think of the moment when Moses was hid away in the cleft of a rock and God caused His glory and presence to pass by him, and Moses only got a glimpse of the back of God, and God proclaimed about who He was, just that little moment of seeing a little bit of who God was absolutely stunned Moses. Paul knows the power of what the knowledge of God will do, it will transform your life, it'll change you. It'll change you more than simply you just being saved, but it will continue to transform you in every degree of who you are. This is what he prays for the Ephesians. He didn't see conversion as the endgame, he earnestly prays for God's Spirit to continue enlightening the Ephesians, to more and more of the wisdom and revelation and knowledge of God.

So how does that prayer match up with the way you pray for others? Now you start to think about it. You say, "I'll be praying for you this week." "I prayed for you." Hopefully that's the habit you're in. Well, what are you saying to God? What are you praying? How does it match up, this last week, when you were praying for other people, does it match up with something like this, the growth and the knowledge and wisdom of God? Or are you still stuck on the same prayers for physical health, and safety, and success in life, and general goodwill? This is a challenge for us, this is the model we need.

Paul goes on to explain even more of how that knowledge will hopefully impact and increase their understanding of God in verse 18. This is where

we see the goal of prayer, in verse 18. He goes on to state, "That you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints." Well, we really find our three things that Paul will elaborate on, and we're only going to cover two of them this morning, the two that are there in verse 18, and the third one coming in verse 19 that he actually expands upon. But the first two coming here, Paul wants their increased knowledge of God to lead to a better grasp of their future hope, and God's future glory. He wants them to understand better their own future hope, and God's future glory.

First, he explains his goal of them understanding "the hope to which he has called you." God had obviously called all those in the Ephesian church that were believers. This was evident already from what he said back in verse 4, that God chose them before they were born, God chose them before the foundation of the world. They have been called. They have been called, it is very clear. And Paul says, "It is not just glorious to think of the fact that he called you in eternity past, but the reality of the hope that you have in store for you looking down the road into the future." Paul says, "I want you to know that. I want you to understand more of that eternal hope that is kept in heaven for you. That is down the road, that is coming." He must be referring to that hope of eternal life, as he had already described the guarantee of that hope when they were sealed with the Holy Spirit back in verses 13 and 14. Paul wants them to understand this more, and you knowing God, I hope that you will then understand better, and know better the hope that is to come; the great, glorious hope that is to be revealed in Christ's return.

But not just that, Paul then explains the other side as well, his goal for the Ephesians to understand the riches of God's glorious inheritance in the saints. He prayed for their increased knowledge of God in order to understand their own future hope, but also God's future glory. Paul describes God's future glory as "His inheritance in the saints." Paul wants the Ephesians to understand the glory of God that will be revealed, that moment when He takes the saints as His own.

And let that just be an amazing and startling thought for you, that of all the

things God could inherit, of all the things God could have for His own, if God were to actually receive something as a gift, it's you. That's just shocking, it's absolutely stunning, to think God, who could take anything and own anything, and He could bring it close to Himself, but instead, He decides to take pleasure in the fact that you, who once were a rebel, have now been brought near by the blood of Jesus Christ. That you, who were totally against Him, are now adopted into His family, and He brings you near, and in that glorious moment that will happen in the future when God's dwelling place will be with man, He will have it realized, and He will actually be excited and ecstatic to take you to Himself and inherit you. You think, "This is ridiculous. God, in His pleasure and His glory is deciding to include us into His plan." We are unworthy, we are so thankful that we can be His inheritance. It's a reminder of what Paul has already stated earlier. We have a future inheritance in God, and He has a future inheritance in us. We get God, He gets us. That's the glorious hope to come.

So you think about this, and we come back to our question of how we are praying for one another. Why does Paul pray in such a way for such an end? Why does Paul pray for the knowledge of God so that you can understand hope? Why does he pray that we can understand better the glorious inheritance that God has in us? Why does Paul want the Ephesians to fixate upon the eternal destiny of believers and for God? Because you might be sitting there thinking, "You said this was going to be a model for us. You said this was going to be a way by which we can now turn around and pray for one another, and I'm struggling to grasp that. How is this a practical model for me in praying for brothers and sisters here in this church? How is this actually functioning in that way? Does this really address any need in life, does this actually get down to the nitty-gritty of how we live?"

Well, consider any problematic or difficult circumstance that you might encounter, that maybe you're in right now, maybe you've been in before, or you could hypothetically imagine will come for you or someone else in this church. Consider such a difficult circumstance. How might your increased knowledge of God impact the way you handle that situation? And you might think immediately, "I don't really think it's going to do that much. Just more

information in my brain? More facts and data in there? I don't know if that's really going to help when I encounter that difficult situation."

To that I would say, "I don't think you understand." Your knowledge of God has everything to do with how you will handle the situations that come in life. It is directly connected, there is a correlation you cannot deny. Your knowledge of God is massive for how you will bring glory to Him and what happens the next 24 hours, the next week, the next year of your life should God give it to you. Your knowledge of God is everything, it is the most important thing about you. If you have the correct knowledge of God, you will have a correct response in how you live. If your knowledge of God is bad and incorrect, your response to living for God will be bad, it will fall short of what He desires. If you don't know who God is, then you will definitely be far from knowing what He is doing at any point in your life.

I mean, think of it - when you know the sovereignty of God, the patience of God, the faithfulness of God, the love of God, the goodness of God, over and over again these things proven before you in your own life, when you have seen this and known this and you grow in this, you will be more equipped and more ready to bring glory to God no matter what curveball comes at you in life. It doesn't matter, you're ready for it. But when your knowledge of God is insufficient, when it is immature, when it is still embryonic, and you get hit with a hard wave in life, when you have that curveball come at you, what happens essentially is you're sidelined. You're put on the sideline. You're not able to walk in good works, you're not able to do what God would have you to do - to bring glory to Him. Because you're wondering, "What is happening here? And why would God allow this? And I don't understand, and I can't make sense of any of this."

And so in order to prevent that, and for you to bring glory to God no matter what comes in your life, you need knowledge of God. You need to know who God is and what He's doing. You need that. If you have that, then you are ready to respond. The wave hits you, and you take it in stride. You're ready for the difficulties, you're ready for any circumstance. But it's hard, because it feels so good to pray for safety, and it feels so good to pray for



success, and "I just want to be safe, and I want to have success, and I want things to go well in my life, and when I hold my children at night and I want to put them down and I pray with them, I want them to have a successful, normal life." It's a normal feeling we want, and it's not a bad thing to pray for necessarily.

But what is most important? What has been put before us as most important? Why do we exist? Why do my children exist? To bring glory to God. How will they best do that? Not if they live a cushy life, not if they get everything handed to them and it goes fine for them, and they're living a successful life. That is not the answer. The answer is that they grow and increase and know God. When they know God and who He is and that He has proven Himself time and time again, they will be ready. They'll be ready to live. You bring on the trials and difficulties in life. Because when we encounter those, we're ready to say, "I know who God is, and I know what He's doing. I know what He's accomplishing in this." We pray for one another, that we'd grow in the knowledge of God.

This is what we need to pray for, this is what we need to ask for. "Pray for me, brother. Pray for me, sister. I need to know God more. I need to understand His love better. I need to understand His patience. I need to understand His faithfulness even greater. I will pray for you in those areas as well." Growing in those areas will then amount to bringing glory to God. This is why Paul prays such for the Ephesians. This is why we have to be committed to praying this way for each other. This has to be our model, this has to be our goal, this is what we're desiring to do as a church. Let's be committed to this. Let's be people that are praying people. I really can't think of a better way to pray for someone. After seeing this model before us, I can't think of it. I can't think of what else - "I would prefer to pray for this" - no, and I wouldn't want you to pray any differently for me. This is what I want, I want to know God more. Let's pray that we all increase and grow in our knowledge of God, so that we might eagerly anticipate our future hope in glory. Then we will have our minds set on things above, and not on earthly things.