

Hey good morning everybody. It's good to see all of you. Did you eat enough on Thursday? Did you run enough on Friday? Is everybody doing all right? I tell you what, we're so grateful. I know our family and I know many of you, as well, are just grateful beyond words for the blessings that we were able to remember this past week and thankful for the time that we had together. And I'm so grateful for this time. I've been so looking forward to the privilege of getting to share with you the things that I get to see and read and study each week in God's word. I'm so looking forward to what we're going to see this morning in the book of Ephesians, in our study The Truth, The Way, The Life; our look into this great letter from the Apostle Paul to the church at Ephesus. If you've got your Bibles with you, please open them up to Ephesians chapter 1 where we come to in verse 15 one of the most amazing, one of the most insightful, one of the most incredible prayers you're ever going to read, one of the most encouraging prayers you're ever going to get a chance to look into. It is an amazing prayer. Its wording and its intents and its scope, it's just really, really an amazing thing. I wanted to say this to you before we start out. I was thinking about it this week. I mean we're talking about an amazing prayer. Is there anybody in the room who sometimes feels, like I do, that my prayers aren't that amazing? Does anybody ever feel that way? All right, I'm not alone. I mean I'm trying, right? I mean, oftentimes we get in those spots where what we want to pray for, or who we want to pray for, or the circumstance that we want to bring before God, sometimes we just feel compelled in our hearts and there's a real genuine motive there, and we really want it to go well, then we get down on our knees or we pull over in the car, or we're there in our office by ourselves, and we kind of give it a shot. And it just doesn't seem very amazing. Sometimes it doesn't seem like maybe it went anywhere. I want you to know this morning that it always goes somewhere, that God hears you. But I want to encourage you with a verse that some of you are very familiar with but for others of you, you know what, it might be a new encouragement to you. Go to Romans 8. I want to just remind you of this great prayer truth and this is sort of related but not really. I just thought of it and I wanted to share it with you on this general topic of prayer and the struggle that sometimes you, like me, might have in the midst of that. Look at Romans 8:26. It says there, Paul, again writing here to the church at Rome, In the same way the Spirit also helps our weakness. Did you know this? For we do not know how to pray as we should. Do I hear an Amen? But the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words; and He searches the hearts [God] knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He intercedes [the Spirit] for the saints according to the will of God. I just want to encourage you with that. The Spirit of God who we learned last week dwells within you at the point of redemption, at the point of salvation, God gives us the Spirit of God, the Spirit indwells us, we're sealed in the Spirit so the Spirit never, what? Leaves us. And every time you get on your knees, every time you fold your hands, every time you offer up that prayer, as botched and fragmented as it might feel, the Spirit of God intercedes for you. Did you know that? And there isn't anything on your heart, and there isn't anything on your mind, and there isn't anything that you wish God could hear from you that God, what? Doesn't. I'm just going to say this then we'll come back to where we're supposed to be. I want to say this. The Spirit of God intercedes with groanings. You're not just a number. It's not like he's saying, Oh God, yea, the dude over there in Indiana, he's got a word for you, good, thanks. No, it says that on your behalf, on yours, He groans with words that we couldn't even understand. It's so deep and it's so real and it's so rich, and He loves you that much and He wants you to be before God and all of

your needs and the things that you understand and the things that you don't. I believe the text teaches there's times when you're praying when He does that for you. I think it also implies there's times when we're not praying where He does that for you. Amen. What a great truth. All right. Back to Paul's prayer. Before we get to Paul's prayer here in Ephesians 1, the prayer is in 17, 18 and 19, I want to show you how he begins this passage in 15 and 16. It is a great introduction filled with some things I think we need to stop and take a look at. So look with me if you would. Ephesians, chapter 1, verses 15 and 16. For this reason, what does that mean? Well everything we just looked at the last couple of weeks. With all that in view and the reality of that and the great gift of your salvation and the great promise of His Spirit, for this reason, I too, Paul says, having heard of the faith in the Lord Jesus which exists among you and your love for all the saints, verse 16, do not cease giving thanks for you, while making mention of you in my prayers. Three things I want you to see right out of the text, but I want you to be mindful of as we start out this look into his prayer. Right there you see he is so grateful at the end of that little two verse passage I read. He is so thankful. He's thanking God without ceasing. Why? Why is he so thankful? Well, point number 1 here, just from 15 and 16. From prison in Rome he hears about their faith in the Lord Jesus. You may just read over that. You may just skim over that. That may not seem like a big deal to you, but let me just tell you. Let me tell you what a big deal it is to Paul. Let me tell you what a big deal it is to anybody, listen, who's ever cared for anyone spiritually. Any small group you've ever lead, any class you've ever taught, any church you've ever pastored, any ministry you've ever been engaged with, when you and me and I can think of so many others I've known over years who have invested so much of themselves in the truth into so many. Listen any time you're ever engaged in that process. Paul was engaged in that process in Ephesus. Now Paul's not in Ephesus. Now Paul's in Rome in prison. Paul doesn't see what's going on. Paul's not there to guard and protect. Paul's not in the city limits. No, Paul's been detached. He's been removed from that place. He doesn't know. He can't see. He can't help. Do you understand one of the most discouraging things that I encounter in my life and it happens every once in a while is when I bump into somebody who I haven't seen in a long time. I've been here long enough for this to have happened here in this context, but there are times when I'll bump into somebody and haven't seen them in a long time and I feel bad the minute I see them because I think, I haven't seen them in a long time, and I didn't call them, I didn't write them, and I didn't even know they weren't around and maybe it's been two, three or five years. One of the most discouraging things I ever experience is when I get into a conversation with that person, that guy or that gal, and it becomes evident very quickly that they're not walking with the Lord anymore. That they're done. However you want to say that, they've changed their mind. They got hurt. They got mad. They got ticked. They left. They're bitter. And you can sense it. I can sense it. I can hear it in their voice. I can see it in their eyes. They don't want to talk to me. They don't want to be around me. They don't want to hear about Blackhawk. Something has happened and they're gone. When you invest in people and when you give you life away to people, when you try to care for them and shepherd them, and maybe you did it directly or maybe you're trying to do it indirectly, when that happens, that is a heartbreak. The transverse is equally as uplifting. I know I've said this to you before but I'm going to keep saying to you again and again, every week you walk through that door, every time I get to see you, as here a pastor is talking to his people, and I'm telling you every week you walk through that door and I get to see

you there's a part of my heart that goes, whew, they're still at it. We're still in this together. It may have been a good week. It may have been a bad week but to know of your faith in the Lord. I can't tell you of how many college kids I bumped into this weekend, students home for the break and every time I get to bump into one who's still has a little bit of that light in their eye and a little bit of jump in their step and a sense of spiritual purpose, you can kind of tell it means a lot to them still, I thank God that they're still at it. There is a sense in the heart of a pastor when he hears about their faith in the Lord. Paul had been gone for awhile. Times were tough in Ephesus. The debauchery at the Temple of Diana was persistent as ever. The allurements of idolatry was everywhere and he hears from Epaphras that they're still at it and he's thankful. He's thankful about their faith in the Lord Jesus. From prison in Rome he hears about their love for all the saints. He thanks God without ceasing because he hears about, what? Their love, their faith in the Lord, and their love for all the saints. You say, OK, what's the big deal about their love for all the saints? I'll try to make sense of this for you. Go back to the back of your New Testament. Go all the way to Revelation, then just start going backwards. Go to 1 John 3. It's not going to be on the screen so turn real quick. Thumb through those great pages if you will. 1 John 3:14 and 15. Paul hears from Epaphras in this report about the church at Ephesus that they're faith in the Lord is intact and that they are evidencing this love for all the saints. It says in 1 John 3:14, We know that we have passed out of death into life (translated we've been redeemed); you know that you've passed out of death into life, because we, what? Say it out loud. Love the brethren. He who does not love abides in, what? Death. Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer; and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him. Go to 1 John 4:16. I hear those pages turning. Good job. 1 John 4:16. We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, what? Say it. Love, and those who abide in love abide in God, and God abides in him. By this, love is perfected with us, so that we may have confidence in the day of judgment. How do you have confidence in the day of judgment? Because your life is marked by a consistent loving of others. Look at verse 20 of 1 John 4, If someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, doesn't love him, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has, what? Not seen. Just go down to 1 John 5:1, Whoever believes that Jesus is the Christ, raise your hands if you believe that Jesus is the Christ, OK, hands down, that person is born of God and whoever loves the Father loves the child born of Him. That means you love if you're His and if you're His, you love the brother. You love the one that's easy to love. You love the pretty one. You love the ugly one. You love the difficult one. You love the one that stretches you. You love the one that doesn't dress like you. You love the one that doesn't make as much as you. You love. I love. You love me. We love each other in difficult times. Nothing can deter us from the willingness and the readiness to evidence that love. Now bring it back to our passage. Why is he so thankful for this? He's thankful for this and I'm telling you for this reason because separated from them, now having spent some time apart from them, having invested so much in them, he's wondering, don't kid yourself, if what went on there is real. If I want to know, years removed from my time with you, if what went on here is real and I hear that you're loving each other radically and faithfully and diligently, I'm grateful. Because that means what's going on there is of who? Is of God. If there's not love going on, it's not of Him. You may something but unless your life and mine evidences by the expression of love, it's not true. It's not real. From prison in Rome, he hears about their faith in the Lord. From prison in

Rome, he hears about their love for all the saints. In prison, Paul thanks God for the Ephesians and he thanks God unceasingly. He loved them that much. He never stops thanking God for those two things. It was that important to him. OK, back to the prayer. What does Paul pray for? Verses 17 through the first part of 19. All right, are you there? Here we go. Ephesians 1:17 through the first part of 19 and it says this, that the God, he makes mention of them in his prayer, verse 17, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, that phrase there literally means the possessor of glory. The Father of glory, the one owns and has and possesses all glory, that He may give to you a spirit of wisdom and a spirit of revelation in the knowledge of Him. That He may grant you or give to you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of Him. He prays further in verse 18 that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the, listen, the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance, and, verse 19, what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. This is big. This is really, really huge and I don't say that just because it's a huge prayer. It's an amazing prayer but it's so huge because of the context. I don't want you to miss this. First of all who's praying? And I know that we don't rank people. I know that I'm no better than you and you're no better than me and because you sit there, and you sit there, that's true, we're all the same, all equal in God's eyes. I'm just telling you this Paul. This is a great prayer and the author of it if you will, the one whose heart it comes out of, it's worth looking at. This is Paul. This is Saul converted on the Damascus Road by God, directly called into ministry to by in large birth the New Testament church and he's got something he wants to pray for you. I kind of put those dots together and I want to hear what Paul has to pray for you and for me. Are you with me? Where's he praying from? Don't forget this. He's praying from prison. He's incarcerated. He's in chains. He knows that the end of his road for the most part and his time is coming up. The days are growing short. This probably isn't going to end well and realizes this and yet in his chains, in his bondage, his heart continues to break and cry out for those whom he loves and those whom he's pastured and built into. It's Paul, he praying from prison, time is running out and what's at stake? What's at stake? Don't miss this. What's at stake here and I believe in Paul's heart and mind is the survival of the early church. It means everything to him. God has entrusted him with these churches and their futures and he's built into these places and these men and women and now he realizes his time is running out and how important it is that they get it right. He's not going to get a whole lot of opportunities from here on out so everything said or done has got to count. So I think he chooses; I think he prays his words very carefully. This isn't some quick, "God is great, God is good, let us thank Him for our food" thing. This is really, really profound. This is really thought through. This is really important and while it's written to them, it's for you and I. So OK here we go back to the prayer. What is Paul praying for? Two things right out of the gate. You've got to write these down. Don't miss this. He prays for a spirit of wisdom. Do you see it there? A spirit of wisdom. That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you a spirit of wisdom. Stop there. What is wisdom? He wants God to give you, he prays, he knows these people and he knows what they need and he prays that God would give them a spirit of wisdom. I know you may kind of think you know what it means and you kind of might have a decent understanding, but be really clear here as we think about this. Wisdom, the application of God's heart. It is the ability to, it is the readiness to apply God's heart, what God thinks, what God says is true, what God says is right, what God says is best. It's the application of God's heart

to the everyday of life. All of your life. Your life at home. Your life with your kids. Your life in your mind, by yourself. Your life at work. Your life on the ball field. Your life wherever you go, whatever you're doing. You, Paul believes, because he prays for it for you, you need and I need wisdom. He knows it was the great need of the day as they tried their best to live in Ephesus, right there in the shadow of Diana. If you missed our message at the beginning of the series on the situation there in Ephesus, you should pick it up and listen to it. He knew they needed wisdom. The last part of that definition is divine discernment for the every day of life. Here's wisdom, what would God do? You've got decisions you're making. You've got circumstances that you're trying to deal with. What would God do? Don't think any situation is too small to apply that question to. The answer is wisdom. Whatever God would do there, that's your realization of that, you being able to understand and see that and make that choice. That is wisdom. He prays for a spirit of wisdom and a spirit of revelation. I love this. Write it down. Revelation, the clarity that comes. My goodness, does anybody in the room, other than me, need clarity at times in life. It is the clarity that comes from being exposed to what God reveals. Most importantly, through His word. Most importantly, God reveals to you how you should choose. You see, Paul understand that these people needed to speak a certain way, they needed to live a certain way, they needed to think and value in a certain way and he knew they needed to have revelation. They needed to have God shine down on them clarity so they knew which way to go, how to choose, how to live. Are you with me? Clarity that comes from being exposed to what God reveals. My oldest son and youngest son, Jake and Russell, and me were driving the other night. Russell has just started driving; he's doing great and I was just giving him a little lesson lights. We're just having fun. A country road, pitch dark, we're tooling down this road and I'm like, hey guys, watch. I show them how normal lights then you push the lever, push it forward, and it goes bright. It's like, whoa, that's cool. I said but watch this. I learned this. I don't know how many years I went without not realizing this and felt kind of stupid when I finally realized it when you pull that lever to you, you get both the regular lights and the bright lights and its super bright. I call it super bright lights. We were pulling that lever and I'm telling you the whole road just, boom, lights up. We're like looking in people's living rooms. I mean, we can see deer 100 yards in the thicket. It's just amazing. The boys are like, whoa. And that's what I need. I won't speak for you. But I need that. I need super light. I need super bright revelation. I need God to just reveal and bring clarity and allow me to see. Does anybody in the room need that? I need that desperately. And Paul prays for a spirit of revelation, clarity, an exposure to the light of God. I love this. I love the text. It's right there. Look for yourself. How do you get those two things according to the text? According to Paul's words, he says that God would grant you, give you, a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of who? Say it. Christ. You need wisdom? You need revelation? He says, great, then be closer to Christ. Know Him more intimately. Know Him better. Walk with Him more persistently. Hold on to Him more faithfully. Read Him. Listen to Him. Sing Him. Surround yourself with Him. Because in the knowledge of Him comes wisdom and revelation. And that's what we're trying to do here. We're trying to grow you up to be followers of the ways of who? Him. So that you can have wisdom and a spirit of revelation. Wow. Let's keep going. He not only prays for a spirit of wisdom and revelation but as the text continues there, in 18, I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened. Most of you didn't know your heart had eyes. Spiritually speaking, did you know that? Your heart has eyes and the

eyes of your heart can be enlightened. Eyes of the heart would indicate that your heart kind of goes places. Does that make sense? It does, doesn't it? Your heart and mine, they lead us places. Don't they? Our heart, our soul, it moves us directions. There's something about the heart, the seat of our emotions and our will, it's very important. It's directive in nature and he wants the eyes of your heart to be opened. He wants the eyes of your heart enlightened. Do you remember from Romans 1, we were there not too long ago, what happens to the person whose heart isn't enlightened, but who's heart is darkened. Do you remember 1:21? For even though they knew God, they knew about Him, they hadn't surrendered to Him, they knew about God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks but they became futile in their speculations and their foolish heart was what? Darkened. We won't go on but 22, 23, 24, all the way down that passage, paints this picture of this debauched, immoral, spiraling, wandering away from God all because a heart wasn't enlightened. It was darkened. And Paul says, no, you've come to faith in Christ and want your hearts to be enlightened and when your heart is enlightened you get three things. He prays it right here. He prays that their heart would be enlightened so that that would allow you to know and see the hope of His choosing, the riches of His inheritance, and the greatness of His power. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know, beyond a shadow of a doubt, what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and thirdly, what is the surpassing greatness of the power, of His power, toward us, for us, who believe. Let's talk about that just for a moment. I hope you'll write some of these things down. The hope of His choosing. Listen. You can write that down. As you write that down, also turn to Romans 8. Go to Romans 8:29. Here is, my friends, the hope. Here's what you and I can hope for, knowing we've been chosen. We've talked about being chosen three weeks ago in Ephesians 1, the very first few verses. Here is the hope of His choosing. Look at Romans 8:29, for those whom He foreknew, He also predestined. For those whom He chose, talking about the doctrine of election there. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become, what? Here's the hope of your choosing, that you will be conformed to the image of His Son. God's word promises you that in your choosing, in His choosing of you, in His sealing of you in the Spirit, in the redeeming, in the forgiving work of God through Jesus Christ, you are going to be made, molded, and shaped, sometimes it's going to hurt a little, sometimes it's going to bring some discomfort, but you're going to be made like Him. And you can hang on to that. That's the truth. It's the absolute truth. An enlightened heart knows it has peace. An enlightened heart knows that beyond a shadow of a doubt that you're being molded and shaped to be like Christ in the midst of whatever hardship you might be facing. The enlightened heart knows good will come from pain. You can take it to the bank. Good will come. God's good in your life will come in time through the pain and difficulty of whatever hardship you might be facing. For someone who is His, peace will prevail. It is the hope of your choosing. And you know what, there are many of you in the room this morning and you need that peace. You need to re-embrace the reality and the truth of that peace and you know what, that's why he prays that for you. He wants you to know the riches of your inheritance. He prays that the eyes of your heart would be enlightened so that you would know the riches of your inheritance. What does this mean? Here's what it means, an enlightened heart isn't confused, my friends, or distracted by the offer of earthly riches. Now we're back to idolatry. He doesn't want that for you. He didn't want it for them. Living in idolatry central, Ephesus, he says no, no, no, I pray that the eyes of your heart

will be enlightened so that you will understand, not be distracted, by the offer of earthly riches or the insatiable drive for more of the world's possessions. The enlightened heart understands deeply and sees clearly, there's revelation, there's the clarity, that the wealth, the riches, the provision that is really theirs in Christ; the enlightened heart understands how all that works. The darkened heart doesn't. The enlightened heart understands the great blessing of Ephesians 1:3-14, all we just looked at. They are filled up with and are so grateful and they understand the great wealth that is theirs. You need that kind of, I call that security. The hope in His choosing, you know what that is, that's peace. The understanding of your riches, the inheritance of God, that's security. People think earthly wealth brings security. They realize in time it doesn't. We understand heavenly wealth does bring us security. And lastly, the greatness of His power. You say, why would I need to be reminded? Why would he pray for me that I would be reminded that my enlightened heart would see and lay hold of the greatness of His power? Here's why. Because there's somebody in the room this morning and you're so in over your head financially that you're about to go under and you're swimming so hard and so fast. You are desperate and in that state, you have become weak and lost and scared and you feel powerless. There are people in this room this morning and you are just desperately, and sometimes it seems futilely, trying to deal with and pay attention to an addiction in your life. It may be pornography, it may be food, it may be buying things you can't afford, it may be all kinds of things. But you're struggling and it's winning and you feel powerless. There could be some in the room this morning and you're still trying in and of your own strength to forgive him or her for their unfaithfulness, and maybe its been months and maybe its been years, but it is eating you up, your marriage isn't getting better, peace has not returned, and you feel powerless in the midst of that friction and tension. Some of you in the room, there could be several; you've come to a place where you've got to have people call you in the morning to get you out of bed. You're just that discouraged. You're just that depressed. It just seems that futile. You haven't seen the dawn of a new day in a long, long time and it's just eating you up and you feel powerless. Some have been told that you have cancer. Some have been told you'll never have children. Some have a difficult mom or dad. Even some of you may be adolescents, some of you may be grown adults, and you're still trying to figure out how to show honor and respect to a mom and dad that make it very, very difficult and you just sometimes feel powerless and you want to give up. You say, are you making these things up? No. All that's going on right here. Here's what I want to end with today. Two things. Number one, I want to read, towards the end the prayer, I want to read to you about His power and I want to make that connection for you. Why would he pray for you and all those needs I just listed? Why would he pray for power? Because look at the kind of power it is that he's praying you'll lay hold of. It says there in Ephesians, verse 19, with the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe, then look at 20, this power, which He brought about in Christ, when He [God] raised Him [Jesus] from the, what? Dead. And seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. My son, my daughters, have a CD in my car. It's in my car so I listen to it all the time. I don't even know the title of it but I think it's Hillsong's track 9 and starts out, the same power that opened, the same power that, what? Conquered the grave. The same power that conquered the grave lives in you. As you sing it, it's a chorus they sing, the same power that conquered the grave lives in you. The same power. Are you listening? Are you finding it hard to forgive? Is that addiction getting the best of you? Are you in a difficult time in some

relationships? The same power that conquered the grave lives in you. Does anybody want to say Amen? Amen. Does anybody want to say thank you, God? Just say it. The same power that God used and exercised to defeat death and conquer the grave, He gives to you in His Son. And Paul prays because he knows everything I just rattled off there is true about you and it was true about them and he knew they wouldn't make it unless they laid hold of the power of God that's available to those who know Him.