

Ephesians: Resources and Responsibilities
Part 4
“Prayer For The Person Who Has Everything”
Ephesians 1:15-23
Pastor Charles Price

Let’s read from Ephesians Chapter 1. I am going to read from Verse 15 down to Verse 23, and Ephesians 1:15. Those of you who have been with us regularly over the last weeks know that we have been looking into this letter. We have just looked into this first chapter and seen some of the truths that are being taught here.

And in Verse 15 Paul says,

“For this reason...”

Now that obviously links what he is going to say next to what has gone before. What has gone before is that wonderful statement,

“We have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

That is an inclusive statement. Everything you need God gives you in Christ. There is nothing you need that God doesn’t give you in Christ – spiritually that is, to equip you to live and be the kind of person God wants you to be.

And then in the following verses he amplifies some of these blessings that we do have in Christ. And having told them that, he says,

“For this reason,” (because of all these blessings you have in Christ) “ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

“I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

“That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right

hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

Keep your Bible open at that page.

There were two young boys who were spending a night with their grandparents the week before Christmas. And before they went to sleep, they knelt by their beds to say their prayers and the youngest boy began to pray at the top of his lungs about his Christmas wish, or wishes.

And he said, “God, I pray for a new bicycle,” (shouting it out) “and I pray for a Nintendo and I pray for an iPod.” (When I was a kid you never got things like that of course, but anyway.)

His older brother leaned over and nudged him and said, “Why are you shouting? God isn’t deaf.”

And the younger boy said, “No, but Grandma is.”

Well I wonder how you pray, and I ask myself the same question about my praying. Is my praying a shopping list of needs, wants, aspirations, conveniences?

You know John Stott said something to this effect. “If you want to know where a Christian really is, listen to them praying.”

Well we have the opportunity to listen to Paul praying because in his letters, 22 times he prays for those he is writing to and tells us what he is praying for them. Plus, on 9 occasions he talks about prayer and why we pray.

Here in the letter to the Ephesians he prays three times. He prays for the Ephesians in Chapter 1. And he begins it, “For this reason” and he prays home the truths he has just been teaching to them.

“For this reason, I am praying.”

And you will see what he is praying for, marries what he has already taught them. His doctrine, if you like, is prayed home into their hearts.

In Chapter 3 he prays again. He starts that prayer by saying, “For this reason” and he does the same thing; he prays home the doctrines he has just been teaching them.

And then in Chapter 6 he says, “Pray for me” and his prayer for himself is “I might fearlessly make known the gospel”.

So we have a lot of opportunity to study the prayer life of Paul, which we are not going to do this morning; we are just studying this chapter this morning and seeing now how Paul prays for them.

And I am calling this prayer, “A prayer for the person who has everything.”

Now you have heard about what you give the person who has everything in terms of gifts, but Paul has just said to them that “you have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”

So you might expect at the end of that he says, “So that’s it; I’m so glad you have got it all. Amen. Nothing more to ask for.”

But it’s true, they’ve got everything, he tells them. Then he says, “For this reason, because you have everything in Christ, I am praying for you.”

And he tells us what he is praying for. And you will notice it’s not that they might receive something. His praying for them is that they might know something.

In fact there are four things. Number one:

“That you may know him better.” (That is, Christ.)

You have every spiritual blessing in Christ, so here’s the logical thing: you need to know Christ better to know what it is you have in Him.

Then secondly he says,

“That you may know the hope to which he has called you.”

“I want to give you a perspective and pray that God will give you this perspective of looking outside of yourself and outside of your circumstances and outside of your needs to the hope to which He has called you – something bigger than you.”

And thirdly:

“That you may know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints.”

Now he has already talked (and we'll mention this in a few minutes) about your inheritance in Christ.

Now he says, "I'm praying you will understand something on the reverse side of that, that He has inheritance in you and I want to pray that you will know this.

And then fourthly:

"That you might know his incomparably great power for us who believe."

Now here's what's important about Paul's prayer here. He is praying the agenda of Jesus Christ into their lives – that is what he is praying – the agenda of Jesus Christ into their lives.

He is not saying, "Put your hand up if you have got a prayer request. Oh, you would like – you have got the chimney sweep coming next week – you want to make sure he does a good job? Okay, let's pray the chimney sweep will do a good job for you."

No, "I'm praying", he says "about the agenda of Jesus Christ in your life. I am praying for things that only God Himself can do for you and give to you, and that is knowing Christ better, that is by divine revelation, knowing your hope to which you are called that is by divine revelation. Knowing the inheritance that He has in you – that is something you only know as God reveals it to you. And knowing His power – that is something you only know as God works it in your heart."

You see the preacher can't give you these things. The church can't give you these things. Programs don't give us these things - only God Himself. And I love the fact that in Paul's prayers he drives us back to a condition where I am asking for things, which are not possible apart from the intervention of God.

You know the little boy was right. If you are praying for a bicycle, let Grandma know. I mean write her a letter, give her a list - or your parents.

But what is it – and this begs the question – what is it that you look for – and I ask you about your own praying and about my praying – what is it that we look for in our prayer that only God can give?

What is it in our praying that is about His agenda, not about ours, is about His purpose – not about our aspirations. Because our prayer life can simply be a celestial shopping list of "give me this and give me that and I'd like some of that and give me something else, and more of this and another one of those, in Jesus' Name, Amen. P.S. Give me some more."

And our praying can become like that. I mean what causes you to pray? For many of us, we pray when we are in trouble. “God, get me out.” Or I need something, “God, give me this.”

I know somebody who prays most in the parking lot because they can never find their car. “Oh God, where’s my car? Show me where it is.”

Well let’s look at these four things that Paul prays for the Ephesians, and therefore, by extension, are things that we must pray for ourselves. And I have prayed this for us this morning as I have studied this. So that this is not just a sermon; we don’t just want information.

“Lord, make this real, bring this to pass in people’s lives” because these are the things that enrich us immeasurably.

Verse 17 he says that,

“I keep asking the God of our Lord Jesus Christ,”

And then he explains the things. First:

“That you may know him better.”

We cannot stress enough that the Christian life is not by definition an experience, though there is experience involved. It is not by definition checking off doctrinal boxes (yes, I believe that, check, yes, check, yes, check – at the end of it, you have checked all the boxes).

All of that of course is important because there is objective truth that we affirm and we believe together. But the Christian life is essentially a relationship, a growing relationship with Jesus Christ.

Listen to Jesus’ definition of eternal life in John 17:3:

“This is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.”

“Father, this is eternal life: it’s knowing God; it’s knowing Christ.”

2 Peter 1:3:

“His divine power has given us everything we need... in our knowledge of him.”

Now I know it's part of the lingo of Christianity to talk about a relationship with Christ. My fear is, although it's part of the lingo and we all use it, that a lot of us don't really have a relationship with Jesus Christ at all.

I have talked to people who are Christians for years and it's very evident in the conversation they don't have a relationship with Christ. They may be Christian, but what is a relationship?

It's when you are getting to know each other and you are deepening your knowledge of each other.

For a silly illustration, can you imagine a couple getting married and they have the ceremony, then they go and take the pictures and they move on for the meal.

And towards the end of the meal, just imagine that the husband, the new husband, turns to his bride and says, "You know, this is taking a lot longer than I thought it was going to. I thought we would have finished by now. I mean the photographs took far too long. But you see, I arranged to meet a friend of mine tonight and it's getting late. So I'm going to have to go. And I don't know when I'll be back, but you know, I'll see you when I get home."

And he goes off, goes out with his friend, comes home late; makes himself a cup of coffee. Halfway through his cup of coffee, "Oh, I just remember I got married today. I wonder where she is. Oh, there she is. Sorry I've been out all evening. Now look, I'm really exhausted now because that wedding was busy and I'm going to be up early in the morning anyway, so I might not see you in the morning, but good night."

(You need a good imagination for this.)

And he gets up in the morning and takes off, comes home late, same thing. And if you met this couple about three months afterwards and say, "Hey, how are you enjoying, how are you enjoying your marriage?" (Especially if you asked the wife). She would say, "It is utterly dry and boring."

Of course it is. But do you know how many Christians treat God? We get up in the morning, have a quick, "Good morning God, thank You for looking after me last night. Please look after me today. Give me what I need. Take me safely to work. Bless me. Amen."

Before we go to bed, "Thank You Lord for looking after me today. Please give me a good night's sleep tonight. Take away the nightmares so I don't get any. And bless all the missionaries and save everybody else. Amen."

It takes 30 seconds a day.

And then if you meet a Christian who has no time to spend with God and you say, “How is your Christian life?”

If they were honest, they would say, “Actually, it’s pretty boring.”

Of course it is. You see a wedding and a marriage are not the same thing. A wedding is an event, takes place on a certain date, which husbands are supposed to remember.

My wife reminds me a week in advance, “You know what’s coming up do you?” Oh boy, last year I was away 3,000 miles apart, and it was our 30th anniversary too. And it’s an event, it’s exciting, it costs a lot of money, it’s a big flash, all the relatives come you don’t see any other time in the year (probably never see some of them again).

That’s not the marriage. The marriage starts the next day. And the marriage is lifelong and getting to know each other takes time. Not only getting to know each other but getting to know yourself within that context.

I didn’t know how selfish I was until I got married and then I realized that most things I did were about me and most decisions I made were for my convenience. And suddenly me was no longer the criterion; it became us. And she actually had different opinions sometimes.

As you will find with the Lord Jesus – He actually has different opinions to you. And you have got to allow this relationship to develop and grow.

You know the number one problem in marriages is poor communication. Now it’s usually the wives who say that first. They need to talk – we need to talk.

My wife will sometimes say to me, you know, “Can we have time together? Have you got a couple of hours we can just do something together?”

“Well, what do you want to do?”

“Well, nothing, I just want to be with you. Can we just be together? Will you come shopping with me?”

“No, I don’t like shopping.”

“I don’t want you to shop. I just want you to be with me.”

And just being together is part of the developing relationship, and out of that, your knowledge of each other, your union with each other, is enriched and deepened.

And Paul says, “I am praying for you Ephesians because, you know, you have had the wedding. You are legally now sealed by the Holy Spirit for the day of redemption.” (He said that in Verse 13 and 14.)

“You are in the relationship legally and technically, but I am praying that you will experience the relationship as an ever-deepening, growing development, that all the spiritual blessings you have in Christ will become increasingly experiential. Why? Because you know who Christ is in you and you enjoy Him and you experience Him.

You know the Scripture talks about many ways in which we ought to know God. Some of them are simply ways in which anybody might know God. In fact, Paul says that people are without excuse because God has revealed Himself. He said that in Romans 1, He has revealed Himself in creation.

And one of the ways we can learn about God is by observation. Observation, because as Psalm 19 says,

“The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.

“Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge.”

And the rest of that psalm goes on to say things like that, about just open your eyes and look around you and believe what you see and you will see the fingerprints of God and you will learn something in His creation of the greatness of God, you will learn something of the minuteness of God’s interest when you look at the tiny little creatures He makes. Like a little ant that has a little heart beating inside it, little brain – tiny little brain, little legs and muscles and arteries and veins and kidneys and intestines. You can hardly see them – God manufactured them.

You know somebody said in my hearing once that when an artist paints a picture, he does two things: he copies something, so that when you look at his picture, you recognize it’s a landscape or it’s a portrait. Or even if it is a bit obscure, you recognize what he was painting.

So if you look at a Picasso, which is always a bit obscure, you might see a lady’s head, or half a head and a leg coming out of the back of her head and you say, “That’s a strange woman, but it’s a woman. I recognize that.”

If you don’t recognize it, it’s just a mishmash of nothing; it doesn’t mean anything.

So an artist copies something. But a second thing an artist does is he expresses himself. And why the history of art is so fascinating is that the way artists paint their pictures through the centuries portray the perspective they have on life.

And so an artist expresses himself. So you look at a Picasso and you see this woman's half a head with a leg coming out of the back of it, and you say to yourself, "Picasso is weird. He sees things differently to me. He is expressing himself."

Now when God as the great Creator created the universe, He did only one of those two things. He did not copy anything – there was nothing to copy. All He did is express Himself.

So the heavens declare the glory of God and the creation itself is a revelation of God. Now anybody can see that, but we as Christians, by the way, of all people, should be appreciative of creation and beauty.

There is a lovely old hymn we used to sing when I was a kid. It had a line like this:

*Heaven above is softer blue
Earth below is sweeter green
Something lives in every hue
That Christ-less eyes have never seen*

But eyes that know Christ see in these things beauty, majesty.

We can know God by observation; we can know God by meditation. Our minds think. You know Paul said in Philippians 2:5,

"Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus."

How do you get the mind of Christ? Well you get to know the revelation of Christ in His Word.

"You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you." Isaiah 26:3 says.

Take time to think His thoughts, to know His Word. That's why it is so important that this book is a book that we know, that we spend time in.

Now you can follow plans to read it all through in one year, and probably read it so fast, you don't retain a lot. So just read at your own pace, but spend time in the Word of God, and ask that God, through the written Word, will reveal the Living Word.

It is so important to spend time in the Word of God.

I was talking to somebody a while ago and I was talking about this and he was saying, “Well, it’s okay for you because you are in Christian ministry; it’s your job to read the Bible.”

Well, of course, that is a fantastic privilege, I know. But he said, “You read the Bible because you are in Christian ministry.”

I said, “Have you ever thought it might be the reverse of that? Maybe I am in ministry because I read the Bible and because the Word of God, when it dwells in your heart, something has got to come out.”

I am not talking about fulltime ministry – I am privileged to be in fulltime ministry – but you know, people who spend time getting to know God through His Word will always have something to come out.

But what Paul is talking about here is not so much knowing God by observation and by meditation, but knowing Him by revelation. Because he says,

“I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him.”

That is, that you know things that the Spirit of God reveals to your heart because this is more than the natural process of thinking. We must think, naturally, but 1 Corinthians 2:14 says,

“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

There is this discernment, this understanding, which comes spiritually. That is, the Holy Spirit in us resonates. That’s why one of the evidences when a person becomes a Christian is that they find that this book is a new book. It was not interesting before but suddenly it is.

It is a letter, you see, from Christ to you and the Spirit of God reveals His truth.

When Jesus said to His disciples,

“Who do people say that I am?”

And they gave Him the answers, and then He said,

“Who do you say that I am?”

And Peter answered,

“You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

And Jesus said to him,

“Blessed are you Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father who is in heaven.”

“Peter you didn’t work this out nor did anybody locally tell you about this. My Father revealed this to you.”

And so we are dependent on the revelation of the Spirit of God. Now it’s not that He reveals to us things that are not in the Scripture; He reveals to us the truth of what is in the Scripture, that the natural mind doesn’t understand. But then you understand it.

You see if you have been blessed in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ, which is the key statement that he outworks in the earlier part of this chapter, then what is it that I have in Christ?

“I pray that you will know Him and what there is in Him.”

When I first had a laptop, and I have lived in a day when there was no such thing as laptops, and so these strange things came on the scene and about 20 years ago I think I probably got my first. And I am not technically a whiz kid. I’m a bit technically challenged. But I find there are all kinds of things locked away in the capability of my computer that I know nothing about.

I remember once, the first one I had, I was leaning over it to get something and in my leaning over it, I pushed against some of the keys. And when I came back to sit up, there was the whole Greek alphabet on the screen in front of me.

I thought that’s fantastic – you know, New Testament Greek. I didn’t know I had a New Testament up. I thought this is fantastic. But I didn’t know where it came from and eventually I kept it there for days, if not a couple weeks. And then the time came that I had to reboot it for something so I lost it. I just put it down on the corner of the screen, but I lost it.

So I tried to re-find this Greek alphabet and I tried just banging keys and hoping it would come up. I tried leaning over it to hope I would push the right keys I had before.

And if I went down to the local supplier and said to the dealer, “I would like a program that has a Greek alphabet on it for my laptop,” they would say, “Listen,

you have already got one. What you need is not something new; what you need is to know what you have already got.”

And so it is in Christ, you see, if we have every spiritual blessing in Christ, the more we get to know Him, the more we know what we have in Him. And so often I hear people praying things all the time that are totally not only unnecessary prayers – nothing is going to happen because of these prayers because they are things we already have in Christ.

You know I often hear people pray and say, “Lord, please be with me today.” Well, where in the world do you think that He is? Why do you say, “Lord, be with me today”? You say, “Thank You Lord Jesus, You are present today in me.”

I hear people say, “Lord, pour out Your Holy Spirit.” Well, go back and read what it says in Acts Chapter 2. There was a prophecy in the book of Joel that, “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh” and Peter says, “This day, in your hearing, this Scripture is fulfilled.” All the Holy Spirit God is ever going to give the world He gave on the Day of Pentecost because that is the Holy Spirit – He is one person.

Now the problem is not, “Lord, give us more of the Holy Spirit”; the problem is give more of myself to the Holy Spirit. But we say, “Lord, send the Holy Spirit.” No, He has come; you are just not living in relationship with Him.

So we find out what it is we have in Christ. And if we don’t know Christ, we’ll get everything else wrong because later in Ephesians Chapter 4 Verse 19 Paul talks about those who have lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality, they indulge in every kind of impurity with a continual lust for more.

“You, however, did not come to know Christ that way.”

So something has gone wrong, the antidote of which is knowing Christ that’s going to produce in you godliness and holiness and fruitfulness.

Are you actively, deliberately, intentionally getting to know Jesus Christ better? That’s the prayer of Paul. Because the more you know Him, the more you know of the resources you have in Him and you stop pleading and begging for things that you already have.

Instead you start thanking Him for them and living in dependence on Him to make these things real and to work them out in your life.

The second thing he prays is in Verse 18, the first part of Verse 18:

“That you may know the hope to which he has called you.”

This word hope is an interesting word. We can use it both subjectively and objectively. Subjectively we can say, “I hope I am going to get chicken and baked potato for lunch today.”

You know that might be wishful thinking, I don’t know.

“I hope it’s going to be warm this afternoon.” Forget about it.

That’s subjective, wishful thinking, hoping against hope it might be true.

If I were to say to you, “I hope to fly across the Atlantic this evening”, that is objective because I have a ticket in my briefcase that will take me across the Atlantic tonight. And when I say, “I hope to fly across the Atlantic tonight”, what I mean is that is my full intent and purpose.

When Paul talks here that you will know the hope to which he has called you, this is not a wishful thinking, wishy washy thing, “I hope it’s true because if it isn’t you’ve all been wasting your time”. No, he says, “I want you to know there is a hope.”

And hope, by the way, is a frequent word in the New Testament we don’t really talk a lot about. I mean Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:13,

“These three remain: faith, hope and love.”

We talk a lot about faith and a lot about love, but we don’t think a lot about hope. We think it’s a little too tenuous – it’s not quite solid enough - to talk about hope.

Romans 5:2:

“We rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

2 Corinthians 1:10:

“On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us.”

Galatians 5:5:

“By faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope.”

Colossians 1:27:

“Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

1 Thessalonians 5:8:

“Put on the hope of salvation as a helmet.”

Titus 1:2:

“A faith and knowledge resting on the hope of eternal life.”

There are two elements to this word hope. It does center on the future, what my anticipation is of the future, and that is important because actually in 1 Corinthians 15:19 Paul said,

“If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.”

We have hope in this life, but if only for this life, we are pitied because we don't have a future, it's all going to end anyway like everybody else's is going to end anyway if there is no hope that extends beyond this life.

So it does mean that. It is future looking. But it is also the thing in which I placed my confidence. What do I place my confidence in? You see we can place our confidence in things that are good or things that are bad.

Paul said in 1 Timothy 6:17,

“Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment.”

He's actually talking about material things there. But don't put your hope in the material things themselves; put your hope in God and He will provide what you need. He will provide things for your enjoyment, he says there.

So hope is a confidence in something outside of ourselves. What are you trusting outside of yourself? He says there in 1 Timothy, if it's wealth, be careful; it'll let you down; it'll disappoint you.

If it is God, He won't disappoint you. But it is also orienting our lives around the fact that this is not all there is. You see, in many of our lives, in the here and now, things do get difficult, the lights begin to dim, things begin to fade, we begin to fear, “Where is this going? It's not going to get better; it can only get worse.”

We get old. I don't like getting old, but I have to. And it's not nice because you suddenly realize, “I'm more tired than I used to be. I don't quite get things like I used to, and so on.” It's all part of the process of getting old.

But do we have hope? When you say, “Well I’m going to be older next year than I am now. I mean I have never been as old as I am at this very moment – never. And I’ll never, ever be again as young as I am at this moment. I’m going that way, not that way.”

So are you. So what about our hope for the future? Is there hope? Yes, says Paul, there is hope for the future. And I pray that you will know the hope to which He has called you, that this life, temporary though it is – and every temporary; it appears like a vapour in the morning, like a mist and then disappears, the book of James says.

I sometimes say to Hilary and sometimes I irritate her by it, “How important (if there is an issue or something) – how important will this be in 100 years from now? And there are some things that will be, but most things won’t be.

So let’s put this into perspective. “Well, it’s important now.”

“Yeah, I know, and we live in the now.”

My son is out in Manitoba and he lost his wallet this week. That’s always a bad thing to do because everything is in your wallet, you know, all your driver’s licence, health card, SIN number, everything.

And he phoned me, he said, “Look I lost it three days ago. I have searched everywhere. And now it’s snowed so if I search where I have already searched, I am not going to see it even if I missed it last time because it’s now covered in snow.

“Well you won’t miss it if you searched last time. Have you called the police to tell them in case somebody handed it in?”

“No, I haven’t done that.”

So he called the police. No, nothing has been handed in.

So he said, “How do I renew my licence? How do I get my health card back? How do I do this, how do I...?” you know.

“Hey, Matt, will this be important 10years from now, even one year from now will it be important, even one month from now? Don’t get too uptight; just get on with it. Just get it replaced. How much money was in it?”

“Well, okay, next month you won’t be too worried about that hopefully.”

There wasn’t much money in there fortunately.

But the thing is, you know, we can be so taken up in the now and everything sits on us.

Now says Paul, in the spiritual realm, all that we have in Christ, which is every spiritual blessing, it is an unfolding experience of God; there is a now, a present; there are things we experience now; there are things we don't yet experience. There are things which we will experience one day. There is a fullness to which we are heading.

And we haven't time to talk this morning about the now and the "not yet" elements of the New Testament but there are "not yet" elements as well.

And so I am praying that you will know the hope. Actually in Chapter 2 and Verse 12 he reminds them that there was a time – he says, "remember that you were without hope - there was a time you didn't have hope, you didn't have any confidence about a future. Now that you are in Christ and you have in Him all the resources you need, there is hope."

"And I pray that the eyes of your heart will be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you."

You will live in the now with the "then" in mind. You will live on earth with heaven in mind. You will live a life oriented around future, not just the present and certainly not around the past.

And then the fourth [third] thing is:

"That you may know the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints."

Now, interestingly, in Verse 14 he talked about the Holy Spirit being a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance, and that's a very wonderful thing that we have an inheritance in Christ. "But I am praying for you – you will realize this relationship is not only one-sided; it's two-sided. You will know His – not only His inheritance in the saints - His glorious inheritance in the saints."

Not only do we have inheritance in Him; He has inheritance in us. Now I said this I think two weeks ago. And I am going to say it again; it's the simplest way to say it. Our inheritance in Christ is Christ. That's what you have received: Christ.

And in Him we have what is true of Christ becoming true of us. We stand before God, clothed in righteousness. We have become the recipients of eternal life because He alone is eternal. And we have now been united with Him and all these things come from Christ. So our inheritance in Christ is Christ.

Second point: Christ's inheritance in us is us. That is, that now that you have come into a relationship with Him, you have been brought into union with Christ; He has in you now another person to love and be loved by. He has another personality in which He will work.

And it doesn't matter what your personality is, whether you are an extrovert or introvert, it doesn't matter – one is not right and the other is wrong; it's just you being who you are and the best thing we can be is just be ourselves in our relationship with Him.

And in you, He has your temperament now that He can work through, He has your hands He can work through, your feet He can walk through, your heart He can love through, our lips He can speak through. Whatever it is within your own realm of capability that He is going to use, He has inheritance in you.

And so it's good to wake up in the morning and as we go out in the day and say, "Lord, what is it that You have inherited in me? What is it – I want to know it and I want You to have Your full inheritance that in me today, I am available for Your purpose, Your agenda.

And I think it is marvelous that Paul talks about His glorious inheritance. This is not just, "Oh great, that's another one." No, there's something about you that to God is a glorious inheritance. Isn't that fantastic?

And Paul says, "I am praying that you will know it - His inheritance." You will realize that the whole relationship is not just "I've got Christ; isn't that fantastic?" It's also that Christ has got me and He thinks that's fantastic – He calls it glorious.

And then the fourth thing is that you may know

"His incomparably great power for us who believe."

What is this power? Well there are two aspects to it. There is what I will call His resurrection power where in Verse 19 – middle of Verse 19, he says,

"That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead."

Now what happened? What kind of power did God exert when He raised Him from the dead?

Several times Paul writes about the power of His resurrection. Well Paul writes most fully about this in 1 Corinthians 15. He says this: the last enemy to be destroyed is death. And God has destroyed this enemy by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Now if death is called the last enemy to be destroyed, it means this: that when Jesus Christ rose again from the dead, He defeated – in defeating the last enemy, He defeated everything which threatens to defeat you and me today.

And therefore to know the mighty strength, which was exerted in Christ when He raised Him the dead, is to know that anything that threatens to defeat me today is itself defeated by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now, says Paul, this is to those who believe – His comparably great power for us who believe. And to believe is to appropriate and say, “Lord Jesus, I am looking to You. I thank You for Your victory and Your resurrection life and I thank You for that and I trust You for that.

Now there’s battle of course. There is warfare. But every enemy has been defeated. In fact, he says here, He has put every (Verse 22),

“God placed all things under his feet.”

Anything, which threatens to be over your head, is under His feet. And so there is this resurrection power, this dynamism, if you like, of the Spirit of God at work in my life.

Now this is more subjective, experiential power of God, but He says I want you to know it. But I want you know also something else: the second power is His reigning power. This is more objective. This is His reign and rule in the world.

Let me read you Verse 19 again down to 22:

“That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.

“And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.”

He says Jesus Christ has been exalted to this position far above all rule, authority, power and dominion. Now that is important to the Ephesians, because 6 times in the letter to the Ephesians, Paul talks about these spiritual forces in heavenly realms.

He talks about heavenly realms. In Chapter 6 he openly declares them to be the archenemy of the Christian, of the church.

“Our struggle” (he says in Chapter 6:10) “is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

This is a very real thing. Jesus, three times, said Satan was prince of this world.

1 John 5:19 speaks of the whole world as under the control of the evil one. And when you read the news and watch the news, you certainly see his fingerprints all over the events taking place around the world.

Yes, we are living in a world that is fallen, we are living in a world where evil is active and sometimes seems to dominate. “But, you need to know,” says Paul, “I am praying you will know this: that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, was then placed in the position above authorities and rulers in the heavenly realms – above.”

And he relates that to His cross, His death and His resurrection that His cross has defeated all those principalities and powers.

Now I mentioned just now there is the “now” and the “not yet” elements of the New Testament. There is going to come a day when evil will be finally itself destroyed. Scripture tells us of that.

There will come a day when the Lord Jesus will step out of heaven in effect and say, “Ladies and Gentlemen, time is up; would you please put everything down. All come this way. Every knee will bow, every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

That day is going to come. And at the same time Satan will make his court appearance and will be judged and eternally banished to a bottomless pit. The book of Revelation speaks about that.

So there are some things that aren’t experientially so yet. The reign of Christ in the world – it is true He is King of Kings, Lord of Lords; He is supreme. But in His providence and sovereignty, He has allowed the mischief of the prince of this world to be doing his dirty work. But he is already defeated.

And you and I need to live in a fallen world that does have lots of things that go wrong with it, lots of things that happen to us. Bad things do happen to good people.

Jesus said about a tower that fell down in Siloam, He said, “Do you think the people who were killed were worse than the others? No, they just happened to be on the tower at the wrong time, or under the tower at the wrong time. Things happen, things happen.”

Christians don't survive car crashes better than non-Christians. Christians don't have less heart attacks than non-Christians. We are part of a world that is fallen and things happen because they happen.

But we are secure, not in the fact that we keep on living, not in the fact that we don't get damaged, not in the fact we don't get hurt; we're secure in the fact that in Christ we are safe and we are under an authority that will one day banish all that which is evil and vindicate all that which is right.

Now says Paul, when I tell you that you have everything in Christ, every spiritual blessing in Christ, you might be tempted to say, "Hey, come on, you're kidding me, you're exaggerating. This is okay for Sunday mornings to talk like that but it doesn't work on Monday mornings. It's not about real life. It's just a spiritual escapism to talk in these terms."

Well, says Paul, for this reason, because you have everything, I need to pray for you. I need to pray that you will know Him better. And that's really the essential thing. The other things flow out of that. That you will get to know Christ, and in your getting to know Christ, you will be less concerned about things that go wrong because your security is in Him.

And in getting to know Christ, that you will know the hope that you have in Him and you live in the now with eyes on the hope that He has given to us.

That you will know the riches of His inheritance, His glorious inheritance in us, that you will live in the good of the fact that I am now available to Christ for His purpose and His agenda in our world.

And you will know His power that he actually describes as His incomparably great power – there is nothing to compare it with – you can't say, it is like this or like that. I can give you some ideas: it is the power that He demonstrated when He raised Him from the dead; it is the resurrection power, which defeats the last enemy. But it is His reigning power, where He is sitting now, on the pinnacle of the throne of the universe, far above every power and authority that exists.

And when you know that and when we are praying these things into our lives, as Paul does, and I want to encourage that we do this, I mean take this prayer, take it home with you and make a four page prayer list and just write the four things on the top of each page.

Write underneath two columns. One: how I am going to ask God to do these, what do I think is the way in which He will do these things?

And the second column, fill it out as He does them, as He fulfills it, as He answers the prayer, as you have a greater knowledge of Him, as you have a greater sense of the hope and this orientates you to something bigger and better, as you start to

enjoy His inheritance in you, as you look to Him for His power; write in the second column things that God is doing.

And it will encourage you incredibly. Because as we pray these prayers, as Paul prays them for the Ephesians, we are simply praying home into people's hearts the truths that He has been talking about.

And doctrine is not just something to be known, to be stuck into your mind. It's got to be prayed home, into life, into experience, and that's what Paul is doing here.

Let's pray together. Father, we thank You this morning that we are not talking about abstract, detached truths and doctrines or philosophy or theory. We're talking about something which is only real and only operational as it comes out of knowing Christ, being in a living experiential relationship where, as that old song says,

*Every day with Jesus is sweeter than the day before
Every day with Jesus I love Him more and more.*

And we pray that we will find that in our own experience that every day with Jesus grows richer and deeper. We know we are human, we know we have our bad days, we know we have our disappointing days but we pray Lord, that the graph of our knowledge of Christ will be a graph that is increasing and growing. Through all the blips that the ultimate picture is growth and development in our knowledge of You, our enjoyment of You, our availability to You. And thank You this is the richness of the Christian life. So write this into our hearts I pray. In Jesus' Name, Amen.