

The Necessity of Being a Praying Church

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Preacher: Kevin Murphy

[0 : 00] Heavenly Father, we come before you this morning as a congregation in order to bring worship and glory to your name, in order to be washed in the good news of the gospel, and in order to encounter you, the living God.

You, O God, are the source of all true life. You, O God, are the living waters that our thirsty souls long for. You are the true bread of life that will satisfy our heart's desires.

And, God, while we are tempted to look for love and affection and rest and meaning in so many places and in so many people, God, won't you open our eyes to see that all we need and all we long for is found in you.

Holy Spirit, come and open the eyes of our hearts to see you. Give us spiritual revelation that we might know you and be found in you and find our rest in you, we pray. Father, as we consider prayer, we do confess that, God, we are so often busy with our own agendas, too busy working on our own lives, too self-sufficient to stop and wait on you.

Father, we acknowledge that our hearts are often set on our own programs, too often approach prayer and approach you as just a means to an end, to help us achieve our agenda, to help us get through life as we desire it.

[1 : 13] God, we often come to you for assistance, not for worship or delight or satisfaction. And, God, we confess this sin and we ask you to forgive us. Forgive us for using you to build our own kingdoms.

Forgive us for our prayerlessness. Forgive us for our self-sufficiency. Father, this morning we want to come and rest in you and know you deeper. We want to encounter you.

We want the hope of the gospel to be written deep in our hearts. Come and do that by your spirit, we pray. And, Lord, this morning we also pray for our city. We want to pray for the various churches in Hong Kong.

We bring before you the church in Hong Kong this morning, and we ask for your favor and the power of the Holy Spirit to rest upon the church of our city, God. We pray for each and every congregation that's gathered this morning.

May your word be preached with power and conviction. May worship be genuine and joyful and celebratory, God. May we pray, God, for our brothers and sisters, and we pray for ourselves that your gospel will be written deeply on our hearts, that your gospel will displace insignificant idols and false gods.

[2 : 21] God, in our city, Lord, in our churches, in ourselves, come and do this, we pray. We pray, O God, that the church of Hong Kong will take your great commission seriously. We pray for unity across the churches, for English speaking, Canto speaking, Mandarin speaking, Tagali speaking.

God, help us to love and serve one another together, we pray. And then, Lord, lastly, we ask for your Holy Spirit to come and revive us as a city, God. We pray for the powerful wind of the Spirit to blow through Hong Kong and through our church.

God, we pray for radical conversions and testimonies of men and women getting born again, for relationships to be healed, for restoration, for prayer and adoration to grip our hearts.

God, we pray, come and revive us, Lord. Send revival to Hong Kong, we pray, God. Come and do it in your name, God. Come and glorify your name. Lord, we long for revival.

We long to see Hong Kong swept in a wave of your Holy Spirit, God. Come and do it, we pray, Lord. God, we pray because we cannot do it on our own. We cannot manufacture or produce it.

[3 : 24] We need you, God. And so, Father, while we so often get it wrong, our heart's desire is to see your glory. Glorify your name, we pray. May your name be exalted in our church and in our city and in our hearts, God.

Not to us, O God, not to us, but to your name give the glory. Help us to live for you. In your beautiful and gracious name, we pray these things. Amen.

Amen. Let's listen to God's word being read to us by Betty this morning. The scripture reading comes from Ephesians chapters 1 and 3.

Please follow along in your bulletins or on the screen. For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge of him.

Having the eyes of your heart 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?

[4 : 41] And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe? According to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ, when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.

For this reason, I bow my knees before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be strengthened with power through his spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith, that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and the length and the height and the depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled with the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen.

This is the word of God. Great. Thank you, Betty. Whoa, whoa, whoa. Slow down. Okay. Well, this morning, I'm very excited to continue our series on prayer.

If you are new to Watermark, let me just tell you where we are as a church. We are working our way through Matthew's gospel, and we are in the Sermon on the Mount. And at various points in the Sermon on the Mount, as we come to a specific theme, we are going to pause over that theme and just consider it in a little more depth.

[6 : 52] And so we did this a few weeks ago when we heard about Jesus sending out his disciples as salt and light into the world. And so for three or four weeks, we considered what does it mean that Christ sends out his followers as ambassadors and missionaries into the city.

And then we jumped back into the Sermon on the Mount, and we continued for a few more weeks. And then last week, Chris got to Matthew chapter 6, where Jesus teaches us how to pray. And because prayer is such an important theme, again, we said let's pause here for a couple of weeks and just consider this theme of prayer.

And so that's where we are today. Now, next Sunday, I'm very excited. We've got a guest preacher who's going to be with us. And so I'm very excited about that and encourage you to come and listen to that.

Last week, Chris started off this mini-series on prayer by looking at Matthew chapter 6. And we saw in Matthew 6, Jesus teaches us firstly how not to pray.

The first way not to pray is to pray as a religious act, just something we do in order to be seen by others. And the second thing is Jesus says, don't pray just as a religious ritual.

[7 : 59] In other words, you say many sophisticated in words and you think that God will hear you for your many words, but actually you're not connecting with Him. The true biblical prayer Chris taught us is to come to God in relationship as our Father.

And we come to Him as the sovereign, majestic Lord of all creation. Remember, our Father who is in heaven, the one who brought all things into existence. But we also come to Him with boldness and confidence because He is our Father.

And this really is the ground and the foundation of all prayer. That we come to the majestic God with awe and reverence, but we come to Him with boldness and confidence at the same time.

And so that was last week, the ground and the foundation of prayer. This morning, I want to urge us and exhort us of the necessity and the importance of prayer. And so the big idea for this morning is this, that in many ways the health and the strength and the fruitfulness of Watermark Church going forward, in many ways is going to be dependent upon us being a praying church.

And therefore I want to urge us and exhort us to be a church which is marked by prayerfulness rather than self-sufficiency and prayerlessness. Okay, let me say that again, because this is the big

idea.

[9 : 17] That in many ways the health and the steadfastness and the strength and the fruitfulness of Watermark Church going forward is going to depend on our prayerfulness as a church.

And therefore I want to exhort us to be a church which is marked by much consistent, persistent prayer rather than self-sufficiency and prayerlessness. Okay, did you get that?

Now, when I say we must pray as a church, I mean it in one way and not in another way. We must pray like we must breathe air or oxygen.

Okay, not like we must pay our taxes. What I mean by that is this. We all know that we must pay our taxes. Paying our taxes is a good thing to do.

It's the right thing to do. But my guess is that most of us do it semi-begrudgingly. We do it because it's our obligation. We do it because there are penalties if we don't do it.

[10 : 14] And it's the right thing to do. Sometimes we can approach prayer like that. It's kind of like our Christian text, right? It's like we don't really delight in doing it, but we know it's the right thing to do.

It kind of comes with the territory. That's not how we must pray. We must be a church that prays like we must breathe air and breathe oxygen because without it, our spiritual lives are going to suffocate.

We're going to shrivel up and die. Does that make sense? Okay, great. So this is what I want to urge us. We must be a church which is marked by prayer. And to do that, I want us to consider this magnificent prayer of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians chapter 1 and Ephesians chapter 3.

Now, this passage is very rich and very deep. We're going to just skim the surface because otherwise we're going to be here all day. But let's dive in and take a look at what we can learn about prayer from Ephesians chapter 1.

So look at how Paul starts off this wonderful prayer. He says in verse 16, he says, I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

[11 : 22] Now, this is the first thing we learn about New Testament prayer. The New Testament church were persistent in their praying forever. They were just praying all the time. Paul starts off and says, I don't cease.

I don't stop praying for you. And we may think that's just a nice introduction. That's kind of like the way we say hello. You know, Paul just says, I always prayed for you. But actually, when we read the New Testament, we see that the Apostles are constantly praying for the believers.

Look at what Paul says in Romans chapter 1. He says, without ceasing, I mention you in my prayers always. 1 Corinthians chapter 1, I always give thanks to God my Father for you.

Colossians chapter 1, We have not ceased to pray for you. 1 Thessalonians chapter 1, We are constantly mentioning you in our prayers. 1 Thessalonians chapter 3, We pray most earnestly for you night and day.

2 Thessalonians chapter 1, We always pray for you. Guess what he says in 2 Timothy? We always pray for you, remembering you in our prayers night and day. And here we see it again in Ephesians chapter 1.

[12 : 28] He starts off and he says, I do not cease to pray for you, Giving thanks for you, Remembering you in my prayers. Now, I must confess that I am not there.

This doesn't describe me. But I hope that it will describe me one day. I hope that this will describe us as a church. That watermark, whatever we're known for in the future, That one of the things that will mark us as a church is that we are a church that prays.

And as we look through the New Testament, We see this isn't just Paul. In fact, all the apostles did this. Throughout the book of Acts, They're constantly praying. Every decision that they make, Everywhere they're going, They are gathering together as a group of people to pray.

Let me give us just a couple of examples. Acts chapter 1, They're about to choose a new leader Because Judas has fallen away. And they get together and they pray and say, God wants you to lead us.

Acts chapter 2, They are gathered together in the upper room praying. And God pours out His Holy Spirit upon them in Pentecost. And the whole church changes. Later on in Acts chapter 2, It says they gathered together daily And gave themselves to the apostles' teaching, To fellowship, To breaking of bread, And to prayer.

[13 : 40] Acts chapter 3, John and Peter are on the way to the temple At the daily hour of prayer. That's just what they did every day. They would go to the temple and pray together. Acts chapter 4, They're being persecuted.

They get arrested. They get beaten, Flogged, Whipped. And what do they do? They come together and they pray. And say, God give us boldness not to stop preaching Your Word. I would pray, God get them.

Sort them out. Or God protect us. That's not what they pray. God give us boldness to continue preaching Your Word. Acts chapter 6, They're about to appoint some more leaders.

And they pray, God won't you tell us Who are the right deacons that we should appoint To serve Your Church? And the reason they need these deacons Is that the apostles can devote themselves To preaching and to prayer.

So they appoint leaders So that they can pray some more. Acts chapter 7, Stephen is the first martyr. And while he's being stoned to death, He cries out, God forgive them.

[14 : 39] He prays for the very people That are busy killing him. Acts chapter 8, Peter and John go to Samaria And they meet some people. They lead them to Christ. And they pray together for the church.

Acts chapter 10, Acts chapter 9, Peter prays And he sees a woman raised from the dead. Acts chapter 10, Peter is in a friend's house And he's praying at the normal hour of prayer Like he does every day.

And while he's praying, Jesus confronts his prejudice Against Gentiles. Because Peter kind of thinks Gentiles are lower class. God confronts his prejudice And then tells him The gospel isn't just for the Jews.

It's for the whole world. And that changes the whole dynamic Of the book of Acts And the New Testament church. Acts chapter 12, Peter's in prison for preaching. The church gathers to pray for him.

And he's released from jail. Acts chapter 13, The church fasts and prays As they appoint new leaders In the various churches. Acts chapter, Let me skip that one. Acts chapter 16, Paul and Silas are in jail.

[15 : 40] They've been arrested. And what do they do? They start singing songs And praising God And praying. And the result is that the jailer, The guy who's locked them up in jail, He becomes a follower of Jesus And his whole household.

Acts chapter 20, Paul is about to leave Ephesus. He knows it's the last time He's ever going to see these men. And so he calls them And he gathers them. They get on the beach Before they get on the ship. And they get on their knees And they pray for one another.

Acts chapter 22, The apostles pray And receive guidance As to their future ministry. Whether they should go To Jerusalem or not. Acts chapter 28, They're on their way to Rome. They get shipwrecked On Malta, the island.

Paul prays for a man Who's dying of dysentery. He gets healed. And the whole island Comes together and says, Paul, won't you pray for us As well? And I've skipped out A few others. Do you get the point?

I hope so. I hope so. Otherwise we should keep going, right? Paul, when he writes The book of Ephesians, He's in jail. And he writes these brothers And he says, I do not cease To pray for you.

[16 : 48] Every day I'm crying out to God For you. This was his life. This is what they did. The early church, Whatever else they did, Gospel centered, sure. Missional, sure.

Community orientated, sure. There were men and women That knew how to pray. Persistent, consistent prayer. Watermark, I want to encourage this. We must be a church That learns how to pray.

That's the first thing. Second thing we see is this. Prayer is the key to knowing God. Now, in this book of Ephesians, I want us just to consider The background a little bit. We're going to dive in in a second.

But when we read the book of Acts, Paul travels to lots of different cities In the known world. He goes to Ephesus and Philippi And all over. And wherever he goes, He starts these churches, Preaches the Gospels, Establishes churches, And then he moves on.

Sometimes he goes for three weeks, Sometimes three months, Sometimes a little longer. Now, in almost every city That Paul visited, Out of all of them, The city of Ephesus Is the city that he spends

Probably the most time in.

[17:53] Okay? He goes there, And he stays there For almost three and a half years. Preaching the Gospel, Starts this church, And then he disciples And trains those disciples In the Gospel.

So for two and a half years, He stays in Ephesus, Really grounds them in the Gospel Before he moves on. He then comes back And visits them. And then on another trip, He comes back And he visits the leaders again.

But what's more, Is once he leaves, And he's no longer there, He then sends his protege, This young man called Timothy, To go and lead the church in Ephesus. So they've had the great apostle Paul As their founder, Now their senior pastor Is his protege Timothy.

But then in addition to that, Paul writes three letters To this church in Ephesus That are all in the New Testament. One is the book of Ephesians That we were reading this morning. And the other two Are personal letters to Timothy, One and two Timothy.

So here's this church That has had amazing apostolic foundations. Paul and Timothy Are kind of their founding leaders, right? Then they've got three letters That are all now found In our New Testament Written to them.

[18:59] If there's one church In the New Testament Which is established That is rock solid That doesn't need Any more assistance, It's the church in Ephesus. What could this church Possibly need That they didn't already have?

Okay? Now, For everything that they have Going for them, For all the apostolic input, For all the foundations That they've laid, Paul seems to know That in addition To their great theology, In addition to great leaders, In addition to great discipleship, What this church really needs If it's going to remain faithful To the gospel In not just three years' time, But in 30 years' time, Is an ongoing spiritual encounter With the living God.

And for that reason, What does Paul do? He doesn't just send them a letter, He doesn't just send a delegation, He prays. He prays, And he prays, And he prays.

Friends, You see the significance of this? This church has got everything going for it. Everything you could possibly want. But the one thing they need, Is they need prayer. And so Paul gets on his knees, And he prays.

And friends, How many of us think That the key to growing spiritually Is greater knowledge? If we just knew more, Or understood more, About the Bible, That would transform us, And make us mature Christians.

[20:19] How many of us, When we want to grow spiritually, We sign up for another course, Thinking that the greater understanding, Is going to make us the people, That God's called us to be. And though those things are good, The Bible says that transformation, Actually happens in our hearts, Not just in our heads.

And therefore, We need to be people who pray. And what's true for us individually, Is actually also true for us as a church. If we're going to become the kind of church, That we want to be, That we dream about being, If we're going to be the kind of church, That makes a difference in Hong Kong, And turns Hong Kong upside down, If we're going to be the kind of church, That sees the upside down kingdom culture, Of heaven coming to our city, If we're going to be the kind of church, That we're rich and poor, And educated and uneducated, And wealthy and not so wealthy, And come together and worship together, If we're going to be the kind of church, Where those that have got it all together, And those that are struggling and hurting, Can come and worship together, If we're going to be the kind of church, That sees tens and hundreds of people, Coming to know Christ, We're not just going to need more programs, And more events, We're going to need to be the church, That gets on our knees, And is marked by prayerfulness, And we see this in the prayer, That Paul prays for these Ephesians, He prays and the reason that he prays, Because the things that he wants for them, And the things that we want for ourselves, Are the things that only come, Through prayer, And so what does Paul pray? What does he pray? Well one of the first things, That should strike us, Is what he doesn't pray, Out of all the prayers that Paul prays, In the New Testament, Every one of them that he prays for his friends, You'd think you'd pray for a change of circumstances, But he doesn't, He doesn't pray once for, God's protection against the emperor, Or oppressive armies, Or separation and persecution, Their lives were lived, In far more dangerous circumstances, Than our lives, And he doesn't pray once, For a change of circumstances, So what does he pray for?

Well, Look at verse 17, Look at what he prays, He says here, He says, I have not ceased to pray for you, That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, The Father of glory, May give you the spirit of wisdom, And revelation, In the knowledge of him, So Paul's praying, That God, Through the work of his Holy Spirit, Will reveal more of himself to them, So that they'll know him, And not just know about him, Not just understand intellectually more about him, But that they'll know him, Know him deeply, That who God is, Will be written deeply, On their hearts, It's like Paul knows, That the most important thing, In the whole world, More than job security, More than financial blessing, More than romantic love, More than comfort and convenience, More, The most important thing, In the entire world, Is that they'll know God, And they'll know him deeply, And Paul knows, That this kind of intimacy, You cannot attain, Just through studying,

[23 : 17] And more information, And going on more courses, It's a spiritual revelation, That is given, It's a spiritual relationship, That is cultivated, Through a life of prayer, And so Paul does, Is he writes to them, But in addition to writing, He says, I'm praying for you, And I'm praying, That God through his spirit, Will give you a revelation, Of who he is, That you'll know him, And know him deeply, Friends, Isn't this what we want, For our church, Isn't this what we want, For our children, Isn't this what we want, For our youth, That our youth, Won't be buffeted, Here and there, By every wind of teaching, By all the things, In our culture, Isn't this what we want, For our city, For our brothers, And our sisters, And our siblings, Friends, Isn't this what we want, For the crowds of people, That walk the streets, Of Hong Kong, Looking for meaning, And validation, And purpose in life, Looking at one, After one shop, After another, Going and thinking, This thing is going, To satisfy me, Isn't this what we want, For them to know, The deep reality,

Of who God is, To know that, The greatest privilege, In the world, Is to come to the God, Who made us for himself, And to call him father, And to be, In relationship with him, And so what does Paul do, He prays, He prays, And he prays, And he prays, And Chris read this quote, Last week, But I want to read it to us again, It's from Tim Keller's book, And Tim Keller says this, Prayer is the only entryway, Into genuine self-knowledge, It's the only way, That we actually know, Who we really are, But it's also the main way, That we experience, Deep change, The reordering of our loves, Prayer is how God gives us, So many of the unimaginable things, That he has for us, Indeed, Prayer makes it safe, For God to give us, So many of the things, That we deeply desire, Prayer makes it safe, Sorry, It is the way, That we know God, It's the way, That we finally treat God, As God, Prayer is simply the key, To everything we need to do, And be in life, We must learn,

To pray, And so prayer, The New Testament church, Consistent, Persistent prayer, Second thing we learn, Is that prayer is the key, To knowing God, But the third thing is this, Prayer is the key, To knowing all the riches, Of the Christian life, Okay, Look at what Paul, Goes on to pray, He says, I pray, That God will give you, The spirit of revelation, That you will know him, But what does that actually mean, What does it mean to know him, Well look at what he says, He says, I pray, That the eyes of your heart, Will be enlightened, Such a beautiful picture, He's saying, The heart is the deepest, Control center of our lives, He says, I pray that the deepest, Most fundamental part, Of who you are, That the lights will go on, That you will see, Who you are, And who God is, And yet you'll get proper perspective, In the world, I pray that the eyes of your heart, Will be enlightened, In order that you may know, What is the hope, To which he has called you, And what is the greatness, Of his power,

Towards us, Who believe, Okay, So Paul in a few minutes, Is going to write, In the next chapter, About the great hope, Of the gospel, How the hope, Of the gospel, Reaches down, To the most hopeless situations, And gives us hope, How the gospel, Reaches down, To our deepest, Darkest circumstances, And says, This isn't the sum total of life, There is hope for you yet, He's going to write, About this amazing hope, But Paul doesn't just, Write about it, Or explain it, He prays it, And he says, You see, Most people, Base our hope, On our outward circumstances, Don't us?

Most people in Hong Kong, That's what we do, Our inner peace, Is based on, Outer circumstances, How successful we are, Who loves us, Who doesn't love us, Our image, How accepted we are, People's valuation, Of us, But Paul is praying, Because he knows, That spiritual formation, Is needed, And so he's praying, That for these Christians, It will be the other way around, That their inner peace, Won't be based on, Outer circumstances, Who likes them, Or doesn't like them, How successful they are, Or not, But their inner peace, Will be rooted, On the unshakable hope, Of the gospel, On the steadfast love, Of who Christ is, And on the greatness, Of Christ, He's praying, That they'll come to know, And understand, Who they are in Christ, The unbelievable hope, And the

victory in Christ, Over even the worst circumstances, In the world, And that that will be their fortress, And their rock, And friends, That's what we need, And that's why, We must be a church, That prays, Otherwise, Our two, Our inner peace,

[28 : 10] Will depend on the circumstances, Around us, You get that job offer, And you'll feel elated, You don't get that job offer, And you'll feel crushed, And despaired, Things go well for you, In a romantic situation, You'll feel on top of the world, They don't, And you'll feel like, Your world is crushing in on you, And yet there is a way, To be rooted on the unshakable hope of Christ, Is to be a people, Of prayer, Remember a few weeks ago, We looked at, Ezekiel chapter 37, And in this passage, God, Gives Ezekiel, An impossible assignment, He tells him to speak, To a valley of dry bones, And to tell these bones to live, It's an impossible task, And the point is, That the spiritual life, That God calls us to, And the mission that God sends us on, To be ambassadors into our city, Is an impossible one, It's like speaking to a graveyard, There's no hope of us accomplishing it,

On our own, And yet he calls us to do it, He asks us to do that, He says, I know that you can't do it, But I'm asking you to do it anyway, And so how are we to do it, How are we to do the things, That God has called us to, How are we to speak to our neighbors, And to see our mothers-in-law, Coming to know Christ, Well this is how, It seems like a pointless task, But in God's economy, Prayer is a power that accomplishes, That which we cannot accomplish, In our own strength, But we desperately need, And so we need to pray, We pray that the eyes of our hearts, And we pray that the eyes of the hearts of our city, Will be enlightened, In order that they will come to know, The hope of the gospel, In order that they'll come to know, Who Christ is, And be moved and changed, By his greatness, And the greatness of his power, And so Paul writes and he says, I'm praying for you Ephesians, And this is my prayer, And my prayer that your hearts will be opened, To know the hope of the gospel, To know the power of the gospel, That accomplishes even that, Which you can't accomplish,

In your own strength, And Watermark, That's why we must be a praying church, All this is theory, And so let me tell you a story, That highlights, Some of the realities of this, It's a bit of an unusual story in some ways, So this doesn't happen every day, But this does happen, In just off the coast of Scotland, There are a bunch of islands, Called the Hebrides Islands, Okay, And in the years, For about four years, Between 1948 and 1952, There was this incredible revival, That took place in the Hebrides Islands, Just unbelievable stuff, But the way that it all started, Was there were these two old ladies, One of them was 84 years old, And one of them was 82 years old, And one of them, I don't know which one of them, But one of them was as blind as a bat, Okay, And, But these two ladies were convinced, That their villages and their towns, Desperately needed God, And so they would pray, And so every week, On a Tuesday night, They would get together, And they would get on their knees, And they would pray, From 10 p.m. at night, Until the early hours of the morning, 2, 3, 4 a.m. in the morning, Praying for their village, Praying for their city, Not, I don't think there are any cities, In the Hebrides, Praying for their towns, Right?

And one night, They're praying, And the one old lady, Has this vision, And she has a vision, Of the old church, Stone church, Filled with young people, And so, She's so consumed with this vision, That she calls the minister, And says, Listen, Listen, You and your elders, Better pray with us as well, God wants to fill the church again, And so they decide to join them, And so for the next couple of weeks, Every Tuesday night, And every Friday night, These seven men, And these two old ladies, Pray at 10 p.m.

[31 : 57] Until the early hours of the morning, And they're crying out to God, God, You've got to save our towns, And our villages, God, You can't abandon us, We need you, Pour out your spirit, Anyway, The one night, They're praying, And this one man, Starts praying, And it's about just after midnight, And as he prays, The power of God, Is unleashed in the room, And listen to, How one historian wrote it, She said this, There are those in the village, Of Arnall still today, Who will verify the fact, That while this brother prayed, The dishes on the dresser, Started to rattle, As God turned loose, His mighty power, And then wave after wave, Of divine power, Sweat through the room, At the same time, The spirit of God, Sweat through our whole village, People suddenly woke up, Houses were lit alight, All night, People walked into the streets, With great conviction of sin, Others knelt down by their beds, Crying out for God's mercy,

As these people, Left the prayer meeting, One of them walked into a house, And asked for a glass of milk, And he found the lady of the house, On her knees, With seven others, Crying out to God, For his mercy, This is like three o'clock in the morning, Within 48 hours, The pub, Which is normally

crowded, Had closed its doors, And so what happens is, There's this like, Just wave of God's power, Through the towns and villages, And so these ministers, Go to Scotland, And they call a man, To come and help them, Because they don't know what to do, With all these people, And so this man, Duncan Campbell, Comes, And he arrives on this, Mail ship, At 8.31 night, In the port of Hebrides, The one town, And the minister meets him, And says, Listen, We're going to have a short church service, Now at 9pm, And then we'll, Take you to get some dinner, Is that alright with you? He says, No problem, As they go to this church, And they have this church service, At 9pm, And he says, It's a pretty ordinary service, Nothing too spectacular, And as he's leaving, He's walking down the aisle, This young person in the church, Gets on his knees, And cries out, And he says, God, You can't abandon us, God, We need you, Pour out your spirit, We are thirsty, And we are hungry, God, Give us your spirit, And this young man, Falls into a trance, And suddenly, The whole room changes, And so this minister, Duncan Campbell, Turns around, And he tells the organist, Listen, Play another song, And suddenly people, There are about 200 people in the church, They start just coming to the front, And they start confessing their sins, They say, God, We need you, And at that moment, The church doors in the back open, And there are 600 people outside, That come flooding into the church, Saying, We need God, We need God, How can we know God, How can we have our sins forgiven?

And so they spend the next couple of hours, It's just people lying on the floor, People running up to the front, Until three o'clock in the morning, This church is packed with 800 people, Crying out to God, Anyway, Eventually, At four o'clock in the morning, They decide, It's time to go home, And they leave, And as Duncan Campbell goes outside, One of the elders says, Mr. Campbell, Mr. Campbell, You have to come to the police station, So he says, What's happening at the police station?

He says, I don't know, But there are 400 people, That are asking for you, And so he goes to the police station, And there are 400 people, And saying, How can we know God? How can we know God? And they cry out to God, For mercy, And this continues, For the next three years, At one stage, They have a church service, At 11 o'clock at night, It finishes at about 2 a.m.

[35 : 28] In the morning, And they get in a car, And they drive 15 miles away, To another parish, And there's a church packed, With 600 people there, And they go until about 4 o'clock, In the morning, And as they leave, They come across a field, And there's 400 people, In the field outside, That couldn't get into the church, That are just on their knees, Saying, God, We need you, Have mercy on us, Forgive us, And so the next three years, The whole village, The whole island, Just absolutely turns around, As God pours out his spirit, On the Hebrides, Pubs close, Dr. Campbell says, He was walking in the streets one day, And he hears this noise, And he looks around, And there's a man in the bushes, That is on his knees, Saying, God, Forgive me, I'm so sorry, There's one man, That said to his sister, I'll never come to your church, I don't care what you do, Everyone else may go, I'll never come, Six weeks later, He's in the church, Saying, God, I'm so sorry, Have mercy on me, Now, I'll tell you that story, Because, That revival,

Like every other revival, In the history of the world, Read the history books, Every single revival, Started with one common denominator, It started with two old ladies, That we don't even know, What their names is, No one can remember their names, One of them 82 years old, One of them 84 years old, They got on their knees, And they prayed, And they cried out to God, For their city, And they cried out, That their towns and villages, That God would give them, A spirit of wisdom, And revelation, That the eyes of their hearts, Would be opened, That God would so infuse them, With power, That they would know, The great riches of Christ's, Inheritance and saints, That they would know, The great power of Christ, That raised Jesus from the dead, That they would know, That people would have a revelation, Of who God is, And they would know the riches, Of the gospel, Watermark, Oh that we would be a praying church, Oh that I would be a praying person, Friends, Can I ask this, Can we repent of our prayerlessness,

Can we ask God to forgive us, Of the fact that we generally, Are so self sufficient, Friends, I want to be like that old lady, Never said that before, But when I'm older, I want to be like an 84 year old old lady, When I grow up, That's what I want to be like, I want to be someone that prays, And friends, I want to ask us, Watermark, Can we be a church, That prays, Now, We're going to come into land soon, But, Briefly, Let's consider this, There is a problem, In fact, There's two problems, The one problem, Is that prayer is hard, It's just difficult, And it's difficult, For a whole bunch of reasons, It's difficult, Because we get distracted, Right, It's easier to watch YouTube, As Chris said last week,

Than to pray, It's easier to do, 30 minutes of emails, And admin, And organizing, Than 30 minutes of prayer, It's easier to, Talk to somebody, Than to talk to God, Prayer is hard work, It's hard, Because prayer is spiritual warfare, And it's tiring,

And it's exhausting, It demands everything from you, It's hard, Because we are self-sufficient, And self-reliant, And it's hard, Because like Kristen said, Sometimes we doubt, Whether prayer actually works, Prayer is just hard, But there's a second reason, There's a second problem, And the problem is that, Even though you may be convinced, By the scriptures, That prayer is important, When you are told, By anyone, Including your pastor, We must pray, Being told that we must do something, Doesn't actually empower us, To do it, Right?

You might be inspired, For a week or two, But inspiration fades, In two or three weeks time, We're no longer inspired, And we just drift back, To our normal things, In other words, You can't just be inspired, That doesn't change us, We actually need a change of heart, So I come to you and say, We must pray, You may say, Yes I'm convinced I must pray, But that doesn't empower me, To actually pray, So is there any hope, For a prayerless people, Is there any hope, For people like you and I, Well thankfully there is, And the hope that we need, Is found in Ephesians chapter 3, In the second part of the scripture, That is on our bulletin, And so let's look at that, Really briefly, Paul in Ephesians chapter 3, Kind of continues the prayer, That he starts in Ephesians chapter 1, He starts praying in Ephesians 1, And he gets sidetracked, By describing the gospel, In chapter 2, He describes the wonder of the gospel, He gets distracted, And then he comes back in chapter 3, And says, Oh yes, Where was I?

[40 : 03] Sorry, Let me continue with my prayer, And he finishes off the prayer, That he started in chapter 1, And so look at how he prays, He says this, For this reason, And what is the reason?

The reason is the wonder of the gospel, The reason is the fact that, Though we were dead in our sins, God, Because of his incredible love for us, Because of his indescribable mercy, Reached out and made us alive with Christ, He raised us up with him, And seated us in the heavenly places, By grace you have been saved, Not by good works, This is a gift from God, Because of this, For this reason, He says, I bow my knees before the Father, I bow my knees before the Father, I don't bow my knees before a taskmaster in heaven, Who's saying, Let me see how long this church really prays, I don't bow my knees before a Lord, Or some boss that's checking when a clock in and clock out, I don't bow my knees before the pastor, That's seeing who came to the prayer meeting, And who didn't, I bow my knees before my Father, My Father who loves me even more than I love myself, I bow my knees before the Father,

Who sent the Son to die on the cross for me, I come before the Father, And he says, I bow my knees before the Father, From whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, In other words, He's saying, I bow my knees before the Father, The one in whom I find my identity, My validation, And my self-worth, You see friends, In our city, There are all sorts of things that are trying to name you, Your boss is trying to name you, Either a good employee or you're a bad employee, The market's trying to name you, Either good at what you do, Or you're bad at what you do, Your family's trying to name you, You're an honorable son, You're a dishonorable son, Everyone's trying to name us, And he says, I come and I bow my knees before the Father, The one who gives me validation, The one with whom, Before whom I get a name, A name that says I'm his beloved son, I'm his beloved daughter, For this reason, I bow my knees before this Father, The Father who accepts me, Because Jesus died on the cross for me, And I ask that according to the riches of his glory,

He may grant me to be strengthened with power in my inner being, Friends, Do you feel exhausted? Do you feel weary? Do you feel burnt out? Do you feel finished?

Paul says, I'm praying for you that you may be strengthened in your inner being, Paul says, I'm asking you to pray, Because, Not because that's another duty that you must do, I'm asking you to pray, I want you to be a people of prayer, Because I want you to be strengthened in your inner being, He says, I pray that according to the riches of his glory, He'll grant you to be strengthened in your inner being, Why?

[42 : 51] So that Christ may dwell in your hearts, That you being rooted and grounded in his love, May comprehend, What is the breadth, And the length, And the height, And the depth of Christ's incredible love, And to know this love, That surpasses knowledge, That you may be filled with all the fullness of God, See friends, On one hand, God is saying to us, Watermark, I want you to be a church that prays, I want you to embrace the cost, And I want you to stay up late, And I want you to

get up early and pray, And I want you to fight spiritual battles, And I want you to get out of your comfort zones, And I want you to be a church that prays, On one hand, God's calling us and say, Watermark, Let's be a church that prays, But on the other hand, Can't you see how God is inviting us, To come home, And find our rest in him, You're saying, I want you to be a church that prays, Because I'm your father, And I love you, Because I want you to be rooted, And grounded in love, Because everything that the Bible says, About my incredible love, I don't just want it to be in your head,

I want it to be in your hearts, I want the reality of my love, To be, To flood your hearts, So that in the best times of life, And in the worst times of life, You are on a rock solid foundation, Which is my love, I'm inviting you to come and find your rest in me, Come home, Come home, Come and be filled with all the fullness of God, Come and be filled with the depth, And the profundity, And the breadth, And the length, And the height, And the depth of my love for you, Come and be a people of prayer, Friends, To devote yourselves to prayers, To be fully human, Because prayer is an invitation, To be filled with the love of God, That surpasses all knowledge, Surpasses all anxiety, Surpasses all stress, Surpasses the greatest moments, And the worst moments of our lives, It's an invitation, To anchor our souls, Into the unshakable grip of his love, And to be filled with all the fullness of who he is, And therefore,

We must be a church that prays, Friends, This morning I've tried to urge us, That we must be a church that prays, We must be a church that prays, Because the New Testament pattern, Is consistent, Persistent prayer, We must be a church that prays, Because it's the only way to know God, And to know him deeply, We must be a church that prays, Because it's the way to know the deep riches, Of the Christian life, To know the hope of God, And the greatness of who he is, But also we must be a church that prays, Because it's God's invitation, To come and know, And experience his profound love, And to build our lives, On an unshakable foundation, And therefore, Can we be a church that is marked, By great prayer, And so therefore, Let's pray now, Let's come before him, In prayer, Great and glorious God,

Father, Father, Some of us are exhausted, Some of us are utterly worn out, God, We come to you, Because you are the source of all life, You are water for our thirsty souls, God, We come before you, Because you are gracious, And tender, You are forgiving of our sins, We find our validation, And our identity, And our meaning in you, And we ask you, God, To come wash over us, In your love, Father, Some of us here, Have been running so hard, We've either been running away from you, Or we've been running to earn your love, And your acceptance, Christ, We want to give up running from you, God, We want to surrender, And we want to come before you, Father, Some of us this morning, Are petrified at the thought of surrender, Opening up our hearts, To your love, God, Because we don't know, What that will mean, What you'll do, When we do surrender our lives to you,

God, Won't you, Come and join you, And give us faith, Won't you help us, Lord, To trust you, Father, I pray for us as a church, God, I pray that you will open the eyes, Of our hearts, Lord, We pray, God, That we will know, The great hope to which you've called us, God, God, When we feel utterly hopeless, When we feel like, We have no hope, God, Won't you flatter our hearts, With your hope, God, Open our eyes, To see it, God, Enlighten our eyes, To see the hope of the gospel, God, God, I pray you'll open our eyes, To see the great power of God, That you, God, Who raised Jesus from the dead, Are at work within us, And therefore, We can trust you, God, I pray that you bring us, To the end of ourselves, That we won't be a church, Which is marked by self-sufficiency, We won't try and do things, In our own strength, But that Lord God,

[48 : 02] We'll get on our knees, And we'll, Cry out to you, God, Come and have your way, God, I pray, Lord, In your gentleness, Won't you break us, Lord, Won't you break our pride, God, Be gentle with us, I pray, And yet God, Rid us of ourselves, And bring us to the end of ourselves, That we may find you, Come and wash us, In your tenderness, In your love we pray, We pray these things, In your name, Amen,