

Timely Prayers For Turbulent Times – Eph 1:15-19a

Welcome to another online-only service at Coram Deo. Wherever you are, I'm glad you're with us. And if you're new to our church . . .

We consider you our guest, and we'd love to know. Just text "Guest" to the number on your screen, and someone will get back to you this week to welcome you.

Last week over 3500 views were recorded as watching our livestream. Crazy high.

Normal is 600. And it goes to show that the seats of our *building* may be empty . . . But the church is not. Because the church is you. The church is us.

Despite the fact that we are disconnected and separated by city blocks and country miles, we are still *very* much connected by the Spirit. So the church is full.

And so is God's Word. Eph 1:15-19.

[15] For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints, [16] I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, [18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, [19] and what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe. Let's stop there.

It's a timely prayer for turbulent times. A template for how to pray for one *another*, and how to pray for *ourselves*.

A template we'd do well to use. Because you'll never go wrong praying Scripture. Unless you interpret poorly.

You'll never go wrong *thanking* God for the things he's inspired, and you'll never go wrong *asking* God for the things he's inspired.

Especially in the midst of such uncertain, unprecedented, difficult times.

It's a template I can't wait to roll out, because I've been using it all week. Even last night.

Awakened by our dog, I was praying some of these while trying to go back to sleep.

Starting with this:

1. Thank God for one another. (v15-16a)

That's the first part of this template from the Apostle Paul.

And I don't know about you, but this is a no-brainer for me these days.

One of the silver linings of this social separation we're in, is that it makes the heart grow fonder. It makes us long to see each other. Yearn to be together.

So thanking God for one another requires no effort at all.

➤ But *more* important are the reasons of faith and love in each other. V15.

Paul starts by saying, *For this reason*, and then says in v16 – *I do not cease to give thanks for you*. For this reason . . . I thank God for you.

And in between, he *gives* the *reasons* for his thankfulness. *Because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love toward all the saints* (15). All the believers.

Paul thanked God for them, because of what he heard about their faith and love.

Things he heard about in the midst of his *own* trouble – sitting in prison.

➤ As far as it depends on us, may we never leave any doubt as to what people hear of us. May we never live in such a way that those around us aren't sure about our faith and love. Causing them to *pause* when giving thanks.

May our lives *show* what we profess. May our actions and words *demonstrate* what God has done in saving us.

And when we see it in others, may we always thank God for them.

Thank God for their faith, their trust in him. Thank God for their perseverance. And thank God for their love. Their *love toward all the saints*. (15b)

Their *heart* for their brothers and sisters in Christ.

➤ I love that in you. I *love* your love for one another.

I see it in your joy when you're *with* each other. I see it in your *generosity* toward one another. I hear about it in your compassion and service. I love it. And thank God.

And I love your *faith*.

I see it in your consistency to be here. I see it in your hunger for God's Word. I see it in your *steadiness* during these times. And thank God for that too.

But most of all, I thank God for *you*, because of those things.

And want to encourage you to do the same with one another.

That's the first way to pray for each another in turbulent times.

Thank God for one another.

Second:

2. Pray for wisdom to live for God. (v16b-17)

V16-17 – *I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, [17] that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him.* The knowledge of *God*.

The verbiage feels a bit awkward, but the sense is clear. "I'm thankful for you," Paul says, "and I pray for you." That's the idea of v16.

I'm thankful for you and I pray for you.

And *what* he prays, is that God would give the Ephesian believers *wisdom* and *revelation*; discernment and insight.

V17b – *May [God] give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation.*

And just so you're clear, he can't be saying they need the Holy Spirit *himself*. Because they already have him. They're sealed; indwelt. (13)

So he must be saying they need the *attributes* of the Spirit. In this case wisdom and revelation. Revelation, as in a greater knowledge *of God*; greater insight . . .

And wisdom, as in a heightened ability to do what's best; more discernment.

Both, attributes of the Spirit, to *live* for God.

➤ And I say that, live for God, because of the last phrase of v17 – *in the knowledge of him*. Meaning, "in the context of a close relationship with him."

Knowledge of a person, when used in the Bible, doesn't just mean knowing *information* about them, but *knowing* them. Up close and personal. And living accordingly.

Like an apprentice does with a **master craftsman**. A violin maker, for instance.
The apprentice learns the nuances of crafting world class violins, not by watching from afar, or knowing *about* his mentor. But by being *with* him. Up close. Every day.
So that he grows in wisdom and insight, as more and more is *revealed* to him. More about his master's *ways*, and more about the master *himself*. Both.
The apprentice receives wisdom and revelation *in the knowledge of*, or in the context of a relationship with, his master. And then applies it in his *own* work.*****

So too for us. That's exactly how *we* receive wisdom and revelation; with *our* master. Our loving heavenly Father.
As he gives, and we glean, more and more wisdom and insight in the context of our relationship with him, we're all the more able and inclined to live for him.
To do his *work*, his way. To fulfill the ministry he's entrusted to us.

Pray for that. *Pray* for that kind of wisdom.
Pray for it in yourself, and pray for it in one another.
Pray for greater insight into God's *Word*, and greater knowledge of God's *ways*.
And pray for a closer relationship to bring it all about.
Pray for wisdom to live for God.

3. Pray for a greater ability to know and perceive the things of God. (v18a)

That comes from the phrase in v18a – *having the eyes of your hearts enlightened*.
May [God] give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, [18] having the eyes of your hearts enlightened.
“The eyes of your heart” referring to your ability to know and perceive *unseen* things; spiritual things.
Because we don't *actually* see with our heart. That's what our eyes are for.
So Paul must be using this phrase to describe our capacity to know and perceive things above. Things of God.

Pray for that. In yourself *and* others.
Because we tend to *close* our eyes, don't we? Fall *asleep* at the wheel. Grow *blind* to the things of God. Lose focus. Become distracted. Clouded in our vision.

➤ In which case, we need cataract surgery to cut *away* what's cloudy. The layers and filters of this world and our flesh . . .
That *block* the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Cor 4:6)

We need the pupils of our heart *dilated* to allow more *righteousness* in.
We need retina surgery to repair the burn of sinful images.
We need Lasik surgery to restore our vision of all things beautiful. Pray for that.
“Oh God, give me eyes to see! And my brother too.”

Let's pray for such an exposure to the *light*, to the things of *God*, that exposure to the *darkness* leaves you blind. Groping about and despising it.
Like stepping into a cave from the brightness of the sun. Your exposure to the light, leaves you blind to the darkness.
Unless you stay there. Unless you *peer* into the darkness more and more. Allowing your eyes to adjust, so that *light* is the thing that blinds, instead of darkness.
Like when you come *out* of a cave.

➤ Don't go there. And if you are, don't stay there.
Dwell on righteousness instead of sin. Look to the Son, instead of Satan.
And pray for others to do the same.

Pray for a greater ability to know and perceive *spiritual* things, and a greater inclination to focus on them.
Pray for a greater sensitivity to things above, instead of the darkness in things below.
In turbulent times *or* calm, pray for a greater ability to know and perceive the things of God.

4. Pray for the confident expectation of life to the full and life forever. (v18)

V18. After saying he prays for their wisdom and enlightenment, Paul tells them why – *that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you*.
Or as we would say it today, what the hope is, to which he has called you.

Either way, what *is* that? What is the *hope* to which God has called us?
Life to the full and life forever. Just like Jesus said in John 10:10 – *I came that they may have life and have it abundantly*. To the full.

And what is *that*? Life to the *full*?
Life with Jesus. Life in the Spirit. Life with purpose.
Life filled with love, joy, peace. Free of sin's consequences and free of guilt's stain.

I ran into a quote recently along these lines.
“The Christian worldview says Christ's sacrifice doesn't just bandage things up so we can limp through life; it restores fullness and wholeness to life, both now and forever.” (Jeff Myers, *The Secret Battle of Ideas About God*, Kindle location 1695)
Part of the hope to which God calls us, is life to the full.

➤ *And* life forever. Eternal life. Our inheritance as Paul says it a few verses earlier. (11)
A place in heaven, and the life to enjoy it, forever and ever.
In Christ, it's ours. Promised and sealed.

Which is why *the hope to which* God has called us is not a wish, or a possibility, or a dream; but a certainty.
Biblical *hope* is the anticipation of something certain. Like the fact that this pandemic will pass. We don't know when, but we know that it will.
And even more certain, is the confident expectation of things promised by God. In this case, life to the full and life forever.
That's *the hope to which he has called you*.

➤ And we need to pray for it, because far too many people lack it. Far too many believers don't have it. They don't *have* a confident expectation of eternal life.
They don't really *believe* there's something more; now *or* later.
They don't *trust* God's Word.

They're full of doubt and live in fear. Especially in the midst of all this.
“We're all going to die, and life is never going to be good again.”
They may not say it, but they're thinking it. Maybe even you.

And one of the best things you can do is pray. Pray for yourself, and pray for others.
So that it's no longer fear and doubt, but the confident expectation of life to the full and life forever.

5. Pray for the blessings of life in community. (v18b)

Or as Paul says it, *the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints*. V18b.

I'm praying for wisdom and enlightenment he says, *that you may know . . . what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints*.

Or, what the riches of his glorious inheritance are, in the saints.

Referring to all the blessings, of life in community. That's the idea of the phrase *in the saints*. Life in community.

Paul wants us to not only know and experience the riches of our inheritance in *heaven*, later; but the riches of our inheritance *in the saints*, now.

The blessings of fellowship, partnership, and friendship found in the church.

The blessings of encouragement, support, and truth found in biblical community.

Those are the riches of [God's] glorious inheritance in the saints.

And praise God they're found here. Every single one of them.

➤ But not everybody experiences them. Sometimes because they're sitting on the fence and don't *want* to, and other times because they aren't sure they're welcome.
Or that they fit. Or that such blessings even exist.

If that's you, let me assure you they do. And that they're available. And that you *are* welcome.

The riches of God's glorious inheritance *abound* among us, and we'd *love* to share them with you.

So come. Come and pray with us for even more. Even *more* blessings, and more people to experience them.

So that when this troubled time is over, we find the riches of God's glorious inheritance *overflowing* among us. Pray for that. Pray for the blessings of life in community.

And last . . .

6. Pray for the power of God in our lives. (v19a)

I'm praying for wisdom and enlightenment Paul says, *that you may know* [v19] . . . *what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe*.

We can't even begin to get our minds around the power of God.

The power that created the heavens and the earth with mere words. (Gen 1)

The power that *upholds the universe*, and holds it all together. (Heb 1:3; Col 1:17)

The power that forms us in the womb. (Ps 139:13)

The power that parted the Red Sea. The power that conceived a child in a virgin.

The power that raised Jesus from the dead. The power that lifted him heavenward.

The power that protects us from Satan.

And the power to save us from an eternity in hell.

We can't even begin to get our minds around it, because it's immeasurably great. Beyond our ability to even *comprehend*, let alone quantify.

And yet, it's directed toward us. Us! I pray, Paul says, *that you may know . . . what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe*.

God's power is directed to *us*, loved ones. At work in *us*. Available to *us*.

➤ That only thing left is to experience it. That's the idea of *knowing* his power.
Once again, it's not an intellectual thing, but an *experiential* thing.

Pray for that. Pray for God's power in your *own* life, and pray for it in others.

That's what I was praying last night.

Pray for it in your family, and pray for it in our church.

Pray that we would see it, experience it, and apply it on a daily basis.

Pray that we would *seek* God's power.

Pray that we would *open* ourselves to it.

Pray that it would course through our lives like a rushing torrent.

Pray that it would light our church with a brilliance that's blinding.

Pray that it would steel us against the lure of temptation.

Pray that it would compensate for our perpetual weakness.

Pray that it would compel us to love our enemies.

Let's pray for the power of God in our lives. (Summary)

You ready? Somebody lead out. Right now. Right there in your home.

Husbands, dads, lead the way. Just start praying out loud right where you sit.

I'll close in a minute.

Prayer – God, thank you for our church. For the faith and love that is so abundant. Give us wisdom to live for you, eyes to see you, confidence in your promises, blessings in community, and power in our lives. Pour it out, Lord. Pour out your power and love, and open the eyes of our heart to see it. And see you. (No amen)