



PRAYER FOR THE SPIRIT

Prayer: Our Foundation & Our Future | 7.19.26

Mark Saunders

(The following text is automatically generated and has not been edited)

Mark Saunders 0:00

We're in the second week of a series here in July called "Prayer: Our Foundation and Our Future. I was given some choices as to which text to preach on prayer. Joanne took mine, so no, they're all great. And so, if you have a Bible, it's open with me to Ephesians chapter one. We're going to spend some time there looking at the first prayer in the letter to the Ephesians. He also prays in chapter three. I don't know if someone's preaching that later. Maybe they will. But love this prayer that Paul prays for the Ephesians in the first chapter of this book. Paul loves praying for churches. Checks out right. He writes nine letters to seven churches, and he pens between 11 and 14 prayers, depending on how you count. This is my chance to tell us that praying for churches is good. Let me say that again: praying for churches is good. Okay, we are not in competition with the other churches. Everybody gets that. Speak kindly of your brothers and sisters who go to other boxes on Sunday. Okay. okay. Churches are notorious for making it competitive. I get together with other pastors, and invariably one of them's going to ask, "So how many are you running? And I've learned not to play the game. I tell them, "Same as you, not enough. That's the deal, because what we want is that every church to be flourishing by the power of the Spirit for God's gospel to go forward in every box that we pass. So next time when you come to church here on a Sunday and you're passing that big one or this little one, instead of wondering what's going on there or feeling better or worse compared to what's going on there, just pray for the Holy Spirit to work there. Can you do that with me? All right, that's bonus material that was not assigned. But let me get to what was. All right, if you weren't here back then, I have a few preaching ticks. You're going to see some of them. I draw a map on my belly. All right, here we go. So, Ephesus. This is the Mediterranean Sea. This is Israel down here near my belly button. But up here, just north of Israel, is modern-day Turkey, and that's where Ephesus and its ruins are. It's where Paul landed about 20 years after Christ died, ascended, arose again, and ascended to heaven. Paul goes there for the first time. I was blessed to be able to lead a trip over there and see Ephesus and its ruins. It's it's pristine. It's amazing. If you like old things, it's one of the best old things I've ever seen in its form. Some of you are sitting next to an old thing. So anyway, hope you like them. But it's beautiful. This might be what it looked like as Paul walked into the town of Ephesus for the first time. Two years he leaves, and about two years later, on another journey, he returns, and this time he spends three years in Ephesus planting the church. You can read all about it. If this gets slow, I'm not offended. Go to Acts chapter 19. Just fill your minds with the joy of Ephesus. But Paul plants a church there over three years. I'll talk more about it in a bit, and then leaves. And about four years after that, roughly, he's imprisoned and he starts writing letters as he heads to Rome for his trial, and and that's where we get the letter to the Ephesians. The part that we're going to study today is in chapter one, after 14 great verses. Read the whole book; it's amazing. But the 14 first verses there detail some of the most important parts of our Christian theology, and I'm not going to have time to preach those today. But we will start in verse 15. We're all going to stand up if we can. I know some of you are you know stood the whole time you were singing. You're like, this is my time to sit, but I'm going to have you stand for just a second. And today we're going to read with feeling the Word of God. First service blew it. Don't do what the first service did. All right, everybody ready? Verse 15. Okay, okay, settle down.

Mark Saunders 3:54

Everybody, 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 in the knowledge of Him, 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, and what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might. May God bless the reading of His Word. Have a seat. Going to spend most of our time in verses 17, 18, and 19. But let me start

with what Paul starts with here in verse 15. His impetus, his his reason for praying this prayer. He says, "For this reason, pointing backwards certainly to the previous verses, which describe the the hearing of the gospel. In Ephesus, the believing of those believers in that gospel-it's their salvation. He says, "Because you've come to Christ, but not just that. Because I have heard of your current faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints. You've come to Christ. You've grown up in Christ. Your faith in Him is blossoming. You're faithful to Him, and it's manifesting itself. And how you love. You're loving people. All the saints. I love that phrase. All the saints, not just the ones you like. All of them. Novel. Your love abounds. He's he's hearing these things. He's like Ric Flair. He's going woo. He's so excited. Sorry, you got Pine Cove. Do you know who Ric Flair is. You may know Ric Flair is. Google it. Go ahead. There you go. Thank you. All right. He's a wrestler. All right. I digress. He's excited, and so verse 16: their faith, their love, their their decision for Christ. It compels him to pray for them. He says, "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers, he can't stop saying thank you to God for the Ephesians. They are a blessing to him. One of the good things in his life, when he prays, he's like, "Oh God, thank you so much for Ephesus. They're killing it over there. Now, anybody like to be refreshed? I like to be refreshed. Okay, yeah. When I when I'm traveling like we are right now, I sleep every night, but not well. Can I be honest with you? I'm in my 50s now. I got that the bed at the house set up the way I want. Who's with me? Anybody on this? And listen, it could be a great bed. It might move. It might shake. I don't care what it does. It's not mine. And so when I get home tonight, I'm going to stand next to my bed, and I'm going to thank God for that bed because I'm going to sleep different when I get there. And my bed refreshes me. The Ephesians refreshes Paul. He thanks God for them, and he doesn't stop there. He remembers them in his prayers. I thank God for it. Without ceasing, talk to him on your behalf, he's thankful for where they are, but he desires, wants so much. He desires and wants so much more for them. Does everybody understand that about you as a Christian? I don't care how long you've been doing this. Thankful for where you are, but God wants and hopes so much more for you. But Paul writes to the Ephesians, and then he details three specifics that I'm going to share with us this morning. A lot of times when I preach, I try to make it dactyl. I do motions so that you'll never forget. Is everybody ready to do some motions? These are the three things that we're going to talk about today. Take your fingers, pop your eyeballs at me, say clear eyes. I didn't hear you. That's better. So the first thing we're going to learn is to have clear eyes. Everybody, one more time. Okay. The second thing: take your hand like this and throw it way it up in the air. Say high hopes. So the first one is. Second one. All right.

Mark Saunders 7:54

Everybody, give me the gun show. Here we go. Pop them. All right. All right. Everybody, say total flex. All right. So the first one is, second one is, you're not. Hey, bro, you're not doing them. I see you. There you go. All right, and the last one is what? Okay, I'm watching you, bro. I'm watching you. Thought I took my glasses off and couldn't see you. All right. I hope you remember those things. This is what Paul prays for the Ephesians. It's as we talk through this series of prayers that God had written down in His New Testament through the authors. There, it's His prayer for these churches. My prayer for your church. It's my prayer for our church that God would give us clear eyes, high hopes, and total flex. If you're wondering how that has to apply to the text we're in, here's what Paul asks God for the Ephesians. He says, "Please deepen their understanding. Open the eyes of their hearts. Open their eyes to the hope that you've called them to, to the riches of your glorious inheritance, and to the greatness of your power for those who believe. I I'll start. Can I just start? I already did start. Can I continue? Yeah, clear eyes. Let's talk about those. May God show us who He is. That's what Paul prays for first, verse 17. He says, "I haven't ceased to pray for you that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God or the Father, excuse me, of glory. God's described in lots of different ways in our Bibles. Paul could have used any of those great modifiers to describe who God is, but he chooses doxa, the Greek word for glory. And when when you hear doxa here in this text, just think shine. I'm going to come back to it, but think shine. When you think of something glorious, it's bright. It shines. That's our God. He says, "May the God of glory or the Father of glory give you the spirit of wisdom and of revelation and the knowledge of Him. Grateful that during my time here at Bentry, I was able to attend seminary and sharpen my Greek. Skills. Let me throw some of them at you. The word for knowledge here is the Greek word epignosis. Everybody say epignosis. Now, gnosis is the Greek word for know, like diagnose or prognosis or something like that. But epignosis is a bigger understanding or a deeper dive into into whatever it is you know, there's lots of people who know about God. Maybe you're filled with all kinds of biblical understanding, but you perhaps have yet to go further to probe deeper into who He is in your personal relationship with Him. It goes beyond book smarts to this personal, intimate, deeper relationship with God. He prays that they would have a knowledge of him, an epignosis of him that's rooted in or accessed through two things: wisdom. That's the Greek word Sophia. When I think of wisdom, I think of like the Book of Proverbs, which is a book of wisdom. It's like book smarts. It's like things that you can learn. You know, rote learning, things that can be taught. As I teach up here, or as Leban teaches, he's an incredible preacher, by the way. Super enjoy listening to him. But you know, whoever's up here, I hope you're soaking this

stuff in. You know, I don't think there's any World Cup games on right now, so we're good. You know, you're you're not watching those in your lap. Whatever you are watching, or if you're crushing candy, I don't know what you're doing. But but hopefully, as you listen, you're learning from good teaching, from your own personal study, that's where we, you know, gain wisdom, Sophia. But but he also says that our understanding of God, our epignosis, our deeper dive into Him, comes from revelation. It's the Greek word apocalypsis, and it's the word that describes experience. You know how many people have been walking through life, and some of the book stuff that you learned about God became real because of something that you went through with Him. It's those experiences that kind of hammer home the the things that you learn here in the room, or the stuff that you learn as you read the Bible. He says, "Listen, I pray you have great experiences.

Mark Saunders 11:58

I have you pray you have great, you know, study that you would you know dive deeper into who God is, but this look at me. I say that a lot when I preach. Look at me. This only happens if God does this Himself in you and to you. You can only know about God if God shows you Himself. Look what it says there in that phrase that I pray that God would give you the spirit of wisdom. Some scholarly debate. This is the Greek word pneuma. There's no capital, you know, in the in the word. So some people think it's spirit, lowercase, which would refer to our personal spiritual sides, our personal spirits. But others, the ESV does here, translated as the Holy Spirit, capital S, God's Spirit. I don't argue with either. I think it's a combination of the two. That God's Holy Spirit enlightens our personal spiritual sides to who He really is. If He doesn't teach us, we can't know. He holds His truth and shares it with us. Paul writes to the Corinthians in chapter two of the first letter he wrote to them, and he says, "Listen, we he and his teams impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages. It's it's hard to discern. Jesus spoke in parables. There's there's there's certain things about it that you know the human mind fails to grasp. He goes on in verse 10. He says, "These things, this this hidden wisdom that we've come to teach, God has revealed to us through who, through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. Verse 12 says, "Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit, who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. This might help. I was just in Cuba with Tammy a couple weeks ago, and just had a great time speaking through interpreters to the Christians there. I know a little bit of Spanish, un poquito, something like something like that. I can order. I'm going to order fajitas again. I'm going to have fajitas for the fifth time this week today. I'm getting it in. You guys are spoiled. If you ever move from here, you will know you are in Tex-Mex heaven. God bless you. And but yeah, I know a little bit of Spanish, not enough, and so I could pick up some of the you know conversation bits, some of the words, the but but I couldn't talk, and so I wanted as the trip came to a close, the last day we were there, I wanted to talk to the leader of the organization there, Pastor Carlos, and and so I waved over Jorge. Jorge, he's like 24, just a spitfire of a guy, but he was our interpreter. He made fun of me all week. He called me tanke. Does anybody know what tanke means? It means tank, but it means fat. He was calling me fat, and he made it sound like he was being all, "Oh, you're a tank. He's like, "No, you're calling me fat. That's fine. Anyway, but Jorge was my interpreter all week, and so I said some really deep-hearted, deep, you know. Things to Pastor Carlos. I wanted I wanted to esteem his leadership and thank him for the opportunity for our church to partner with him and and tell him I'd be praying for him and and I'd say it in English and Carlos would say it in Spanish and you're like what's this got to do with the Holy Spirit listen, God interprets Himself to us He translates, helps us understand who he is. Apart from him, we might get parts and pieces, but except that the Holy Spirit, as we're going to see in the next part here, enlightens our hearts, we can't know him. That's why Paul goes with a more picturesque explanation. He goes with eyeballs. He says, "I pray you, Ephesians, would have the eyes of your hearts enlightened, clear eyes. That's where that song that we sang earlier comes from. Grow up singing it here with our youth group, and it's a it's a banger. It's a good one, but it's rooted in Ephesians chapter one. Open the eyes of our hearts, Lord. We want to see you. Spiritual darkness is something we're all born into.

Mark Saunders 16:06

Our spiritual eyes are closed. It's how our enemy likes it. He he likes us not to see. It tells us in Paul's second letter to the Corinthians that the God of this world has blinded the minds of unbelievers to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. Then he gives us some good news a couple verses later. There's a God who likes to shine, for God who said, "Let light shine out of darkness. That's creation. Let there be light, right? The God who said, "Let light shine out of the darkness, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. I don't know what your favorite app on your phone is. Here's mine. You ready? Yeah, I'm old. All you pine covers, this is my favorite thing on the phone. You know why it's my favorite? It's because I lose stuff on the regular, like after last service, I lost this phone. How's it going? Yeah, but like I have a truck, you know, my keys, and I'm just getting kind of sloppy. I get in a hurry, and I'll just drop the keys, and they'll go down into the labyrinth that exists beneath the front truck

seat of my truck, and I'll reach down there trying to find it. I'll find all kinds of stuff, French fries, right? But I, I can't find my keys, and so I'm in the you know 100 degrees and 4,000 percent humidity of Tampa, Florida, with my light out, just trying to find what I can't see. And this is the work of the Holy Spirit in the spiritually dark. He shines a light. I don't know how to turn it off. He shines a light so that we can see. This is Paul's prayer for us. Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. It's my prayer for us. We are prone as Christians to looking without seeing, and so God is asked by Paul to open the eyes of the Ephesians' hearts. You know, when I was praying for you guys coming here, and when I pray for my church this prayer, I pray that God would make it impossible for us not to see that He'd overcome not just our ignorance but our obstinence. Both are problems. When I was a little kid, my mom would ask me to clean my room before I could go outside to play on a Saturday. Back when cartoons were like for three hours on Saturday morning, anybody remember that? You'd watch cartoons, and then before you could go out and mess around in the neighborhood with your friends, you had to clean your room. And mom would say, "Go clean your room, and I'd go and do what I thought was a bang-up job of cleaning this room, and so I'd go report to mom done, and she'd always inspect the room, which was always a problem for me because she'd come in and she'd essentially stand behind me and she'd say, "Well, Mark, let's talk about this room. Do you really think it's clean? I'm like, "Man, this is spotless. I don't know if it's ever been cleaner, mom. And she'd say, "Okay, and then she'd start walking me around. My mom was, you know, hands-on. She was a hands-on mom, so she'd grab my head from behind, right, and she'd kind of point it in the direction of like the pile of laundry that was kind of tucked in behind my bed. She's like, "Mark, what's that? "Oh, you you found that? Oh, that's that's my laundry. Well, where does that go? You want that stacked in the laundry room? Okay, we're gonna need to do that for you. Okay, come on. And then she'd take me over here, and she'd stand me in front of my bed. She'd she'd take my ears again, just take it. Let's talk about this bed. What do you got underneath that blanket? All the other blankets, half my toys, stuff I don't even know, right? And she said, "Well, you know, like like step one and cleaning your room, you got to like smooth that out and put all those things away. I was like, "Yeah, you're right. You got me again, Mom. And she would just hold my head so I could see.

Mark Saunders 19:53

That's what I pray for every Christian in here, every soon-to-be Christian in here, every one of us. Who follow after Jesus with all of our lives, let Him hold your head so that you can see. Let Him open the eyes of your heart. Everybody, do it with me. What's the first thing? What's the second thing? Good. See, it's working. Let me talk about high hopes. May God infuse us with His hope. Verse 18 continues this way as Paul continues to pray. He says, "I pray that you would enlighten them, that their eyes would be open, that they may know what is the hope to which He has called you, and what are the riches of His glorious inheritance in the saints. That first phrase talks about this hope to which he has called you. Everybody understands if you're a Christian in here, you've been called. Like you, you submitted to the calling of God and and chose him. Certainly, I weren't saying I'm not saying you weren't involved, but but if you've called on Jesus to be your Savior, He called you that you might do that. Now Ephesians actually presents that beautifully to us, as Paul writes in chapter one, verse three says, "Blessed be the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, even as He chose us, called us, kind of a synonym, before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him. Jesus chose us. He said as much as He taught in John 15. You did not choose me, verse 16, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit. Yes, we choose Him, and if you haven't yet, I pray you do. But if you end up choosing Him, it'll be at the Holy Spirit's prompt, and He will call you into life with Him. Paul implores then the Ephesians to to walk according to their call. Look what it says in chapter four, verse one. I just said it. I, as he pivots from all the great things he taught us in verses or chapters one, two, and three, he says, "I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been. Yeah. Now he could have referenced many different parts of this calling that we've been given as Christians, but he here for the Ephesians prays that they would understand, that they would see, and and grasp the hope to which he has called us. Christians are called to a hopeful life. Do you have one? You living in hope? Faith is a part of that. Certainly, faith precedes hope, or is a part of hope occurring. But, but hope is different from human hope. Human hope is like maybe, like I had hoped that the USA would win the World Cup. wasn't super confident in that. Sorry that we lost, but that's human hope. We'll see what happens. But Christian hope is assured. It's certain. It's on lock. We have a hope that is scary, but it's ours. People I've been staying with this week just got a new S-Class Tesla, which is one of those self-driving cars. And so the first time we went to grab some fajitas, they suggested a restaurant I'd never been to, and then they plopped me behind the car or the steering wheel of this self-driving car and said, "Let's see if we make it right. And and I had the I had the very weird. If you've never done this before, it's a very weird experience to sit in a car and just let it drive, right? It's crossing midway, all six lanes of traffic, and I'm not touching any buttons or pedals or anything like that, and it was it was terrifying, right, babe? It was kind of scary, and and so I was sitting in a car that I wasn't in control of, heading to a place I did not know. Does that describe Christianity? Yep. Sitting in this life

that I'm not in control of. No matter how much you think you're in control, you are not. Heading into a place where you might think you're going, but you may not end up there. Right.

Mark Saunders 23:55

And this is what it is: to hope in a sovereign God, to trust him for what we can't know. I had just a blast watching Cubans worship. They're in a very oppressed, without electricity, hard time. Food scarce, scarce. It's it's you know we just we're so spoiled. Everybody gets that you're spoiled, right? Not enough people are nodding. Let me say that again. Do you get that you're spoiled? I understand you've got hard things. I'm not negating those things, but we are blessed beyond, right? And so when you get around Christians who aren't, you're like, "Well, how's this going to go? I'll let you know. It's one of the best church services I've been hanging out at for a while, because here comes all these Cubans who don't have a whole lot else except their hope, and they get together to worship God like we do. It comes out how they sing. Still don't know what they said, but but you could kind of tell they meant it. Their hope translates into their joy, translates into their perseverance, translates into so much more. The ultimate hope that we have is this glorious inheritance in the saints. Again, translators, you know, take this difficult Greek sentence and argue about what it's about. Is it our inheritance in God, or is it God's inheritance in us? I think I'm fine with both. Is everybody grateful that we inherit God? Does everybody understand that God inherits us. Yeah, we sang a song about it, you know, 1015, years ago. We are His portion. He is our prize, right? It's that sloppy wet kiss song. Okay, but it basically talks about this dual inheritance that we have. We get Him. We we want out. Everybody understands that we won out, right? We get him, but he gets us. It's this inheritance that we look forward to. It's an inheritance that we enter into every day. The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases. His mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning, said Jeremiah in the rubble of Jerusalem. Lamentations. It's one of the most uplifting, encouraging texts in the Bible, and it's in the book of Lamentations. But it's just this reminder: we have hope if we have God. Every day, we enter into His hope, but we have this ultimate hope. Obviously, at the end we get to spend eternity with Him in His heaven. You know, hope is is where God wants us to live. He wants us to understand and and you know function in in the hope that we were called to. So often I I choose fear as my default. You know what fear does? It wonders how is God going to fix this. It's rooted in question, even doubt. But thankfully, Paul reminds us as he writes to Timothy, "Hey, man, we haven't been given a spirit of fear. It's not ours. We're a different people. We've got power, love, and self-discipline. As he writes there, but he says here, "I'm praying that you'd understand. You got hope, and so Christians were meant to hope in the Lord. Hope doesn't wonder, doubt. Hope anticipates. Where fear says, "How could God possibly fix this? Hope says, "I can't wait to see how God's going to fix this. It's a completely different vibe. One more time. Clear eyes, high hopes, and the final one's my favorite. Total flex. Let me the guns one more time. May God incite us with His power. I was going to write there inspire, but I thought inspire was too small. Christians like to be inspired. How about we get incited instead? Is everybody okay with that? Let's walk out of here frothing at the mouth in the knowledge of God's power for us. Some of you are like, I don't know, this guy's weird. But that's what this. Listen, if Paul was writing this with his own hand, he's pressing down a little bit harder right now. If he's if he's dictating this to a scribe, which we think he most often did, I think he's grabbing the scribe's shoulders and he's like, "You got to get this. Write this down, because he wants the Ephesians to know that he's praying that they would understand the power at their fingertips, at their excess.

Mark Saunders 28:19

He says, "I want the Ephesians to know what is the immeasurable greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His great might. Immeasurably be great there. The word "immeasurable" is the Greek word "hooperbalo. It's like hyper, like over. Balo means to throw, which I think is awesome because what do we throw? Balls. I think that's an easy way to remember that one, right? But hooperballah means to overthrow, to cast beyond. It's like that's why it's translated immeasurable. It doesn't register on the chart. It's beyond what we can measure. Means he's inexhaustible. His his power is constant. It never wanes. It's immeasurably great, and he goes on in other modifiers. There, he says, the work of his great might is what is given to us. His power is ours. He's mighty great, this God of ours. If we had time, I'd teach the verses that follow this, where he references the resurrection of Jesus Christ, the ascension of Jesus Christ, the dominion of Jesus and His eternal supremacy in quick succession. He's like this: is the power that we have. God is able to raise dead things from the grave and draw them to Himself. He is in dominion over all things, supreme. in existence, we have God's power, Church. That's what I pray that you would leave here understanding, especially those who are at the stage of life that I'm in, who've had their kids, raised them in the church, maybe saw them baptized in the pool out here, or the the one we used. To have the remember the one that we used to put in the front of the it's like some kind of I think we we we would put a bubbler in there and make it a spa during the week for the staff but we didn't really do that but if you're praying for that kid who has got baptized here at this church who's walked away some of them with a raised middle finger to all that is God,

some of them just like I can't be bothered. But if you've got kids who aren't following Jesus, same. And it's one of the most difficult things for this Christian slash pastor to ever go through. Dark nights of the soul, disappointment-not just in them, in the God who was meant to keep them close to Himself. Okay, if you've been that person who, in your own power, has seen no success, here's what I want to remind you of: what God's teaching Elmer and I, His power. His power is over able to overcome. I mean, I'm praying for the Damascus Road for my my kids over and over again. Like Paul is like the greatest example of God's power. Everybody gets that right. Like he he was a a Christian you know, killer on his way to arrest some when when God in in his story meets him on that road to Damascus, and by his power blinds him physically so he can open his eyes spiritually, and from there it's just power after power after power. You could just even go to the the story of Ephesus itself in the book of Acts, chapter 19. Paul gets there in that chapter, and there's 12 Christians in the whole town, so he's got some work to do. He starts preaching in the gospel, or excuse me, preaching the gospel in the synagogues, and and they kick him out after three months. So he has to take his hard-earned tent making money and rent the hall of Tyrannus. I was actually there. There it is. I actually have no idea if this is the Hall of Tyrannus, but maybe it looked like that. So he preaches there every day, works, and then on his lunch break goes and preaches the gospel every day. Does it for two years, and in two years' time, everybody in Ephesus and in the region around it has heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. Not all have responded, but many have. So many have responded to the gospel that you know the deities of the town have been abandoned, and witchcraft, the books that you know led people into dark magic, are being burned. This obviously makes those in the town who had been used to making their living off of such things a little bit angry, and so they rise up.

Mark Saunders 32:40

Demetrius was the leader of a riot in Ephesus. They couldn't find Paul, so they took a couple of his followers, a guys named Gaius and Aristarchus, and they headed to the amphitheater, which is huge. This picture doesn't do it justice, but it could seat 20,000 back in those days. And Ephesus, being a big boom town, it would fill with you know the the participants in this riot. They railed for two hours. It tells us Luke was really into details. He says for two hours everybody yelled hail to Artemis, the Greek god that they worshiped there. They wanted to kill the Christians, and so apart from the power God interceding on this thing, it wasn't going to go well for the church in Ephesus that day, but God, in His power, did just that. You know how He did it when a lightning bolt, when an earthquake, He brought the town clerk. That's how He's introduced in our scripture, Acts 19. The town clerk comes in, and he gets right. He gets with you know Demetrius and the rest of the rabble rousers, and he says, "Hey, Rome's going to kill us if we keep doing this. Let's settle this in the courts. And every that's it. That's the rest of the story. Everybody goes home. It reminds me. Can I have my? Yeah. It reminds me of how the power of God works. I didn't bring this up because I thought some of you would be worried that I had nefarious intents. It's empty. It's empty. But gasoline is a great way to remember the power of God. Sometimes it's explosive. I learned this as I was doing a burn pile at my house as we were fixing it up. I thought I'd make things go a little faster, so I poured one of these out on a bunch of wood, and I thought I was far enough back, fellas. I really did, but when I threw the match, it just knocked me over, lost my eyebrows. It was really fun. I'm not going to do that again because I understand the explosive power of of gasoline, and I also understand the explosive power of my God. He's the God who spoke everything into existence with a word. He's the God who, you know, called dead people out of their graves and raised His own Son to life again. He's the God who enabled a bunch of Galilean fishermen to speak in languages they did not know as He gave birth to the church. He's the God who will pull you from your grave. And he's the God who will pull you from your circumstances. I don't know the time frame. That's what we get mad about. Hurry up! But God knows, and I trust that if He wants to explode in your life, He will. But most of the time, He just gives us sustaining power. Anybody drive here this morning? Anybody use some of this in your vehicle? Yeah, that's the the way that I'd hope you'd remember the power of God. It's just constant. It's there. May not notice it. May just think you're doing your days, but you are doing your days by the grace of the power of God. He's there, and so Paul prays for clear eyes, high hopes, and a total flex. Got to finish. I see red numbers. If you ever preach here, the red numbers are bad. I I can't. All right. I asked if I could. They said no? So here's what I tell you. Here's how we're going to apply this. I want you to pray this prayer for yourself first, for your family, for this church, and for every church you pass. God, give me, give us, give them clear eyes, high hopes, and a total flex. I want you to start by sending this little three-thing outline to someone you know who's a Christian who isn't here. Go ahead right now, everybody. Start texting. Find someone you don't know and send them those words. Nobody's moving. All right. Clear eyes, high hopes, total flex. When they text you back, as they will, and be like, "Huh? Preach them the message. Tell them what you learned, and say, "This is what I'm praying for you. I know some of you are young, so I gave you this. Because everybody, there you go. That's how you can.

Mark Saunders 37:00

But this is the last thing, and I'll leave you alone. So often we pray for things for ourselves and have no intent to do on them.

Look at me, be the answer to your prayer. Don't just pray for God to God overcome me, point my head in your direction, help me, help me, help me, and then go eat your fajitas and forget. Remember what we talked about today and choose it tomorrow. Open your eyes to who God is. Read His Word. Get back in that life group you left a long time ago, make it here more than once a month. Open your eyes to His truth. Choose hope, not fear. How's God going to fix this now? Can't wait to see, Lord. How are you going to fix this? And then walk in power. Stick your chest out. Serve Christ like you mean it. All right, we're going to close in prayer. We're going to sing it. I was the worship pastor here for a very sad three months, or something like that. But one of the songs that I sang on the stage during that season was the one that we sang earlier. Can you sing it with me? It's our prayer. It's my prayer. Your prayer. Our prayer. It goes like this. Everybody ready? Open the eyes of my heart, Lord. Open the eyes of my heart. I want to see you. I want to see you. Thank you.