

96-08-09b

Okay, we're ready to resume. And we're talking about prayer, we're talking about the things that Scripture has to say about prayer. And we had just gotten into the third major section of our study, having talked about the form of prayer as our first sort of area, and the second area being the things that you include in prayer, the agenda or the categories of things that we might address.

And now we're talking about principles that the Bible communicates with regard to prayer. And this is mainly one thing. There's lots of things you could say, but essentially prayer is an expression of the effectiveness.

The effectiveness of our prayer is an expression of our faith. Prayer and faith are tied together inextricably. If we're praying without faith, our prayer is going to be ineffective.

And to have faith, of course, we have to have the Word of God, because prayer should be laying claim to the promises of God and laying claim to the truth that God has communicated. And if we're simply giving a laundry list of how we wish the world was, we need to be careful that we're tying those requests back and making sure that we're praying in Jesus' name, and that this is, in fact, also somewhere in the realm of God's desire and God's plan, and that we're not simply trying to use prayer as a means of gaining our own objectives. So the passage that we looked at was Matthew 21-22.

The Bible, again, is replete with references to this, and I'll give you just a few of these, and we'll look at just one or two. But Jeremiah 33-3 talks about the relationship of faith to prayer. Psalm 116 is a great place to go for this.

You can look in Psalm 116, verse 1 and 2, verse 10 and verse 17. All talk about trusting in God and reflecting this in prayer. Mark 11, 22-24.

John 15-7. Remember Jesus talking about the vine and the branches? And He says, you know, we see these. It's often quoted that Jesus said, Whatever you ask in My name, I will do that for you.

And one of those passages is in John 14-15. But one of the conditions on that is in John 15-7. Jesus says, If you abide in Me, and if My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

And this is explicitly stated here, and it is implied in all of the other passages where you have a simple statement. You know, we divide the Bible up into chapters and verses, but that wasn't in the original. And so we like to take a verse and memorize a verse and pull that verse out of its context and quote it and claim it.

But if you look at these statements that the Lord made or that are made in the Bible, they always, when it talks about the effectiveness of prayer and the answering of our requests, it's always tied to, Are you praying in the will of God? To pray in the will of God, we have to know the will of God. And to know God's will, we have to know the Word of God. Because that's where He communicates it.

So John 15-7 is one of many important passages in that regard. James 1, 5-8, we've mentioned that in other connections in this little brief study, but we might take a quick look at James. That's one of the very clear passages on prayer.

In this case, it's a prayer for wisdom that James starts out with in James 1, 5. He says, If any of you lacks wisdom, and right in the fifth verse of this letter that James wrote, he brings up this issue of wisdom. It doesn't mean that it's illegitimate to pray for other things, to pray for provision or for sustenance or for many other things in life, but we don't always immediately think of that. How many people say, You know, I'm in a jam here.

I think I'll pray for wisdom. Or maybe things are going well. I think I'll pray for wisdom.

I know that the plan of God, as I saw it in Colossians 1, depends on my wisdom. I need to pray for that. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.

But let him ask in faith with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. Let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord. He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

So prayer is an expression of faith. We need to view it as an exercise in faith and be sure that when we formulate our prayers, we're thinking about the nature of faith and that it's not just shooting up a laundry list of requests. And you might also put with this 1 John 5.14. Now, the Bible also talks about things that can hinder our prayer life.

We know that our own ignorance does this from Romans chapter 8. We don't know how to pray as we should, and God the Holy Spirit operates on our behalf in this regard. But there are some things that we can do to increase the effectiveness of our prayers and to ensure that we are in a position for God to hear our prayers. And I've got eight different things listed here that can hinder, that the Bible says will hinder our prayer life.

The first one is, oddly enough, lack of faith. Lack of faith can hinder our prayer life. Again, Matthew 21.22, we just looked at that passage.

Mark 11.24, John 15.6, James 1.6-7. This is just the flip side of the point we just made. Lack of faith will hinder our prayers. Secondly, if we are not in compliance with God's will, if we are being actively disobedient, God will not hear us.

And this is 1 John 5.14. 1 John 5.14 says, Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And we know that He hears us whatever we ask. We know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

But we have to be praying according to His will. Our prayer has to not be a disobedient prayer. We can't be praying for something that's out of character and out of the will of God.

That's 1 John 5.14. Our request, I should probably phrase that a little better, our request needs to be in compliance with God's will. Thirdly, if our prayer reflects our desire instead of God's, that can hinder our prayer. And this is James 4.3. James 4.3. You ask and do not receive because you ask amiss in order that you may spend it on your own pleasures.

So if we ask and don't receive, that can be one reason that we're expressing our desires rather than God's. Fourthly, we may be crying out in oppression. We may be in a jam.

We may be under pressure and crying out for relief. But we're really asking for the pain to go away. We're not necessarily seeking God.

This is much more the case of a disobedient believer. We see this in the case of Israel in the Old Testament a lot where they would be disobedient. They would be disregarding God.

And as a result of that, their nation would go into decline and come under oppression. And they might have famine. They might have circumstances that put a lot of pressure on them and made them miserable.

So then they would cry out to God for relief. Please take the famine away. Please take the oppressor away.

Please take away all of my bad circumstances. But what is the nature of their appeal? Are they seeking God or are they seeking relief for its own sake? And as soon as the relief comes, they're no more interested in God than they were to begin with. So if pressure doesn't orient us to God, but we're just looking for a solution, and we say, well, I think I'll try prayer.

I'll pray and see if this will go away. That obviously is not going to be an effective prayer. You can find this in Job 35 9-13.

You can find it in Proverbs 1 24-28. And another example is Zechariah 7 11-13. Many places in Scripture, but this kind of stands to reason, doesn't it? Many times God lets us get into a jam to show us that we need Him, that we're being disobedient, that we need correction and so forth.

And if we cry out to Him, but we're not repentant, we have no interest in the things of God. We just want relief. And this is one of the mistakes, I think, that is made in Christianity today, is a lot of evangelism and a lot of ministry holds out God and salvation and Christianity in general as the panacea or the big fix, the big aspirin pill.

Come to Jesus and He'll solve all your problems. Come to Jesus and He'll take all these unhappy circumstances and give you happiness. And what people want is happiness rather than the Lord.

And they'll turn to God just like they might turn to drugs or alcohol or social life or stimulation or immersing themselves in work or any of the other many avenues that we seek God. And their objective is not God. Their objective is their own happiness.

I'm tired of having problems. I'm tired of having no relief from the misery that I'm in. So if religion's the answer, I'll try religion.

And the goal isn't to seek God. The goal isn't to please God. It doesn't involve acknowledgment that we're hopeless and helpless and useless and need a Savior and need God's grace.

It's simply looked at as a big Band-Aid, a big fix for problems. We should not hold out Christianity as a problem fix. The message of the Word of God is we are sinners, we are needy, we are depraved, and we are headed to hell.

And we need the work of Jesus Christ to save us from the wrath of God and the righteousness of God and the justice of God. And if we don't acknowledge our guilt and our need as a part of the salvation process, if we're looking at salvation as a way to improve our circumstances, or if we as believers are presenting Christianity in that light, we're doing a great disservice because that's not the nature of Christianity. We're not a big problem fix.

Jesus promised believers in this world, you will have tribulation. It's a part of our life, and it's something that we know God uses to help us grow and mature. So we should not expect a better Rose's Life.

And a lot of people are led into the fold of churches and Christian circles with the idea that, well, now I've got a big support group, I've got a big helping hands all around me here and a lot of smiling faces and squeaky clean associations, and these folks are going to care about me and help me, and my problems are all going to get better. That's not the issue. The issue is sin and righteousness and judgment and the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

And if we change the gospel, we're not preaching the gospel anymore. So people who cry out simply for relief rather than in repentance and in change of mind, their prayers are not going to be heard. And we can put with this disobedience.

If we're disobedient to God in some area of our life, this is going to hinder our prayers. 1 John 3.22 communicates this. Let's see if I can get there right quick.

John says, Whatever we ask, we receive from Him because we keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing in His sight. Because we're doing the things that are pleasing in His sight, because we are keeping His commandments, whatever we ask, we receive from Him. And

this is a reflection of what John heard in the upper room from the Lord Jesus Christ.

If you have my words and keep them, whatever you ask in my name, I will do. And John is just restating that same principle here. And one of the critical things is to realize what he means when he says keep His commandments and do those things that are pleasing.

Our study of that which is good that will be coming up here will help us understand this because we a lot of times immediately assume, well, if I go out and preach the gospel, then my prayers will be answered. And there's a lot more to what pleases God than just that. But this goes all the way back in the Old Testament.

You can find this in Deuteronomy 1.45. You can find this in 1 Samuel 14.37. You can find it again in 1 Samuel 28.6. There's a great passage that we've studied in the past and we won't turn to tonight, but in Isaiah 59.2, Micah 3.4, disobedience prevents God from hearing and answering our prayers. If we have attitude sins, remember Psalm 66.18, if I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me. We need to dredge up and eradicate the iniquity that's in our heart through looking at it and acknowledging it before the Lord and allowing Him to cleanse us and forgive us for that and then our prayer life will improve.

The seventh point here, if we lack charity, if we lack hospitality toward one another, this can hinder our prayers. This is an interesting point. You find it in Proverbs 21.13. Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor will also cry himself and not be heard.

So we need to be alert for opportunities to express hospitality and that should be a natural outgrowth of what God does in our soul. And if we shut our ears to the cry of the poor, we ourselves will not be heard. Finally, in this regard, husbands who fail in their responsibility to their wife.

This is kind of a scary one for us married males, but failure of the husband toward the wife. Peter records this in 1 Peter 3.7. Husbands, likewise, dwell with their wives with understanding, giving honor to the wife as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, in order that your prayers may not be hindered. There's a lot in that verse to contemplate.

Dwelling with them with understanding, giving honor to them as to the weaker vessel, and giving honor to them as being co-heirs of the grace of life, so that our prayers are not hindered. And a husband that falls down in his responsibilities to his wife will not have an effective prayer life. Interesting.

You wouldn't expect that that would come up in Peter's mind as he talks about husbands and wives, but he says, you need to do this or your prayers aren't going to work. So these are things that can hinder our prayers. I want to just briefly review, and this may be a little heavy, we're going to get into the Greek, but just in passing, and because it's important, it gives us some insight into the way our prayers work and the way that God views our prayers.

We have some vocabulary in the Greek New Testament that's used and translated into English as prayers or supplications and requests. You see this in many of the passages that we've gone to. Sometimes it says, in everything, by prayer, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

We have supplications. We have, as in Romans chapter 8, the word intercession. What exactly is involved in all this? We just have three or four words, and they have very interesting shades of meaning.

For example, the most common word that's translated prayer, this is the word for prayer in general, is *pros euchomai*, P-R-O-S-E-U-C-H-O-M-A-I. And *pros*, of course, P-R-O-S, is the Greek preposition that means face-to-face with. You're right there with something.

You're in front of it. You're staring it in the face, as it were, face-to-face with. And *euchomai* is a word that stands alone in Greek and has the idea of presenting a wish.

This is a desire of the heart. And *euchomai* is a word that's used even outside of the prayer context. I wish that this were so.

It's *euchomai*. Well, *pros euchomai* in the New Testament is always used of prayer to God. So you can think of this as expressing your wish for the outcome of things before God.

Pros euchomai. You're before the Lord. You're standing in the throne room of grace and expressing the desires of your heart.

That may come out in requests or in intercession. It's just prayer in general is laying your heart before the Lord in His throne room. That's the word for prayer in general.

It's by far the most common word for prayer. It's interesting though. That word's only used once in Romans as a verb.

And that's right here in chapter 8 of Romans and verse 26. And of course we've just seen this verse in our studies that we do not know how to pray as we ought. And it's the only time Paul uses that word in Romans.

And it's just our coming before the Lord and communicating these things. We're very insufficient for that. And so the Spirit ministers to us in our weakness.

But there's also a noun form of this, *pros euchai*, which is P-R-O-S-E-U-C-H-E. And it has the very same idea. This is a prayer in general.

Now there are also some more specific words that are used for prayer. For example, here in Romans 8 when it says the Spirit intercedes for us, this is a word that's very infrequently used. It's kind of a tongue twister.

It's ektougkano, which is E-K-T-U-G-C-H-A-N-O. Ektougkano. Now this is an interesting word because tougkano by itself was used in Greek to just talk about what you would run into in the course of life.

You might meet or encounter or attain something. You might find it. You might gain it.

Or you might experience something. This would be tougkano. And so it speaks of a circumstance.

Here's a circumstance in life that you have encountered or run into or found to be the case in your personal life. That was tougkano. Well, ektougkano here means you're taking this circumstance and laying it before the Lord.

Here's my case. Here's my circumstance. And you're bringing it up before the Lord.

And you can see there's a different shade of meaning there than saying this is the desire of my heart. I wish that I were able to accomplish something. I wish that this situation would resolve itself.

You can express a desire of your heart. Or you can say, Lord, here's where I am. I've got this many bills.

I've got this much money. I'm claiming your promise and so forth. So it comes to mean intercession because we lay the case of another person before the Lord.

We say, here's the circumstance as I understand it. We don't necessarily know what their desires are or even what the Lord's desires are specifically. We know generally from the Word of God what they are.

So we bring this circumstance before the Lord. We say, Lord, here's this believer. They're suffering with a physical ailment.

They're suffering under circumstances. They're having a rough go in this way. We bring that circumstance and lay it before the Lord.

And that's called intercession. It's interesting because this is what the Holy Spirit does for us. Because this word, ektugkano, was always used of an inferior going to a superior.

It was most often used in the Greek papyri of someone going to a king and making an appeal to the king. This is like a Supreme Court case. He's going up and saying, I've got to have relief.

I've got to have an answer for this. And that's our position as we go before God the Father. And so God the Holy Spirit mediates as we, as fallen human beings, walk into God's throne room.

God the Holy Spirit is mediating that appeal that we make to the king. And that's intercession. He

intercedes on our behalf.

He's the one that introduces us and accompanies us into God's throne room and phrases and translates our requests and our desires and our prayers into something that's acceptable in God's sight. Because as fallen human beings, even with the rehabilitation that takes place at salvation, we're just not able to stand in the throne room of God. And we won't be able to until we're glorified with Christ at the resurrection and the rapture.

So it's a wonderful word to use for the ministry of God the Holy Spirit. And that's about the only place it's used in the New Testament. It's used there in Romans 8.27 and Romans 8.34. It's also used in Hebrews 7.25. Now Romans 8.34 and Hebrews 7.25 talk about Christ's ministry of intercession on our behalf.

And once again, you have that same idea that Jesus Christ is representing us as inferiors before God the Father as the superior and mediating our contact with God the Father in a way that's acceptable to him. So that's Romans 8.27 for God the Holy Spirit, Hebrews 8.34 for Jesus Christ, and also Hebrews 7.25 for Jesus Christ. Now, it is not always an appeal on behalf of someone.

Sometimes this *egtukano* can be an appeal against someone, bringing up a circumstance where God needs to resolve this against somebody. You have this case in Acts 25.24. And it's a secular case, but you have a king there, and the people are talking about the apostles, that the Jews are all upset at the apostles preaching the gospel. And so one of these kings is saying, these people have come and have pleaded with me, have made a case to me, that something needs to be done about these apostles.

And of course, the people are arguing against the apostles in that connection. That's Acts 25.24. And you also have this usage in Romans 11.2, where Paul is talking about Moses bringing up the case of Israel before God. And you might just take a quick look at that because it tells us that this is an objective thing.

Sometimes we may have a believer in our periphery, or our own situation, where God needs to act, and it may cost this person something. This may be something that needs to be done by way of correction, or rebuke, or instruction in righteousness, and so forth. But in Romans 11.2, God has not cast away his people whom he foreknew.

Or do you not know what the Scripture says of Elijah? I said Moses, but this is Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed your prophets, torn down your altars. I alone am left, and they seek my life. And the divine response is, I have reserved the 7,000 that have not bowed to me to Baal.

But Elijah went to the Lord and said, Lord, look at these Israelites. Here's the case. Here's the circumstance.

What are you going to do? He doesn't express a wish that they all be blown off the planet, but he says, here's the case. I think you ought to act in this. So that's the nature of the word that's translated intercession here.

And there's a noun that goes along with that. In Tuxus, which is an intercessory prayer, you find this noun used in 1 Timothy 2:1 and 1 Timothy 4:5. And once again, 1 Timothy 2 is the place where Paul says, I want men everywhere to lift up holy hands and pray on behalf of kings and those who are rulers in authority. So if we are going to pray for our current president and vice president and Congress and so forth, for some of us it can be quite difficult to view some of these people in government that have the authority over us and pray on their behalf.

Well, isn't this a wonderful thing that this word doesn't say that we have to express a wish on their behalf. We lay the case. Lord, here's the administrative branch of our government.

Here's the legislative branch. Here's the Congress and the Senate. Here's the situation.

Here's the kind of law that we're getting. Here's the kind of policy that's being set in our country. Father, act.

We know the heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord and we lay that circumstance before him. That's an intercessory prayer. So that's comforting to me because if you just radically disagree with somebody who's in authority, do you pray, oh Lord, depose them, get them out at the next election? And what we do is just lay the circumstance before God and let him resolve it as he sees fit.

And we also have another word that is a noun. It's pretty much only used in the noun form and this is deesis, which is D-E-E-S-I-S. And this is the expression of a desire.

This is often translated supplication. And this goes beyond a wish. This is something that we really personally want.

It's something that's near and dear to our heart. We often get into this category when we're praying for a close relative or someone that's in our immediate family or a very dear friend. And we say, Lord, here's the circumstance.

That would be an intercession. We could say, Lord, I wish that things would turn out a certain way and this person would get better and that's a thing. But this deesis is a very intense longing on our part.

And this can be between people. You can express a strong desire just one person to another or you can express this to God. And we only have this used a few times in Scripture.

And I don't think I wrote any references down for that, unfortunately. But it is used occasionally and it has the idea that in our prayers we can distinguish between the kinds of requests that we're

making. Are we laying a circumstance before the Lord? Are we expressing a wish? Would to God that all men everywhere would come to Christ.

Would to God that these underdeveloped countries would come to Christ and God could bless their economies and bless their societies and so forth. Would to God that these orphans that you see in Romania and in some of these countries whose parents have abandoned them because they're unable to care for them or they have a disease or something, I wish that God could find a way to place those infants in loving homes where they could be brought up the way our children are brought up. And you can express a desire that's sort of a general wish that would be the ideal, would be the hope.

And Paul does this a lot. Then you have this deesis type of thing that, oh Lord, I wish this specific person I'm supplicating on their behalf. And this can be the expression of a need.

The reason we use the word supplication is you're asking for supply, something that a great need be filled. So these are some of the things that we can think about in terms of prayer. And it's one of the great ministries of the Holy Spirit to us to aid us in that regard because it's God the Holy Spirit that reminds us of the truth of the Word of God so that we can apply it and claim the promises of God and think in terms of God's plan and pray in Jesus' name.

God the Holy Spirit oils that mechanism in our soul and enables us to think in terms of divine truth. And then once we've formulated that prayer and expressed it as an element of our faith, then He takes that prayer and repackages it and puts it in a form that's acceptable before the God of the universe. And He is the buffer and the translator and the intercessor on our behalf before God the Father.

So it's a wonderful thing to claim and to know that God has made this provision for our communication and the expression of what's on our heart to Him. Now, as we get back to Romans chapter 8, we are coming up on Romans 8, 28 and following. We have just finished verse 27.

He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And then in verse 28, Paul continues. He says, we know something.

Isn't this great? Because it's an exact reflection of what we just studied. We pray based on what we know. We claim the promises and the principles of God's plan based on what we know.

And Paul says, we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. And the implied subject of this, it's an interesting construction here in Greek, but the implied subject is God. God works all things together for good.

It doesn't just happen in a random fashion. In God's plan and God's purpose, God actively works

things together for good for a specific category of people. And it is to those who love God.

Now, is it possible to be a believer and not love God? This is kind of like saying, is it possible to be a child and not love your parents? Generally speaking, children love their parents. But you have children who completely don't appreciate their parents, who don't understand them, who don't know them, who don't think that they're with it, who don't think that they can relate, that they can understand. A lot of people go through a phase of life where they're very... It's like the words of Mark Twain when he said, when I was 17, I thought my father was the most ignorant man in the world.

And when I was 21, it amazed me how much he had learned in four years. And we as believers can do the same thing. And there are believers who don't love God.

And we know that's true because the Bible gives us a command. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God. If this was automatic at the point of salvation, the command would be a wasted breath on God's part, wouldn't it? Why are we commanded to love God? Because it's something we have to do.

And some of us are disobedient and don't do that. We talk about love at first sight, but how many people meet a total stranger and immediately fall deeply and passionately and permanently in love with that person? Why is that not typically possible? Because you have to know someone to love them and appreciate their qualities and their character and their grace under pressure and their endurance and their capacities and their talents and their gifts and their personality and their likes and dislikes. You have to know someone to love them.

Well, it's the same with us. We have to know God to love Him, and it doesn't come to those who don't get to know God. Jesus Christ is going to look out the door at believers in the Millennial Kingdom and say, I never knew you.

You never knew me. And it's going to be a very sad thing. So it says that God works all things together for good to those who love God, those who are called according to His purpose.

Now, the Bible tells us elsewhere, many are called and few are chosen. We'll address this calling and purpose of God. But let's start at the beginning of this verse.

We know that all things work together or are worked together for good. Now, that word good deserves some study, and we're going to do that. I'll give you just a brief preview of where we're going.

There are also, just like for prayer, there are several different words that are used for good in Greek. This one is agathos. And this is good in the sense of something being morally honorable, something being pleasing to God, something that's beneficial.

It's good in a general sense. We have a different word that's used for something that's intrinsically

good. But this is good in the sense of something that is viewed as honorable, right, beneficial.

God is described as good in several places, like Matthew 19, 17, Mark 10, 18, Luke 18, 19. God is good. He represents the ultimate in that category.

Now, there are people who are described as good with this very same word. And in Matthew 20, 15, for example, Luke 19, 17, and so forth, Titus 2, 5, people are, he is a good man, and so forth. But let me just give you some quick points to ponder, and we'll finish Romans 8.28 next time.

But with regard to this good, this agathos good, that God works together here in Romans 8.28, here are a few points. Scripture says that believers are to prove what is good, prove what is that good thing. That's in Romans 12.2. Believers are encouraged to cling to the good in Romans 12.9. Believers are commanded to do the good in Romans 13.3. So already we've seen Scripture say, prove what is good in Romans 12.2, cling to what is good in Romans 12.9, do what is good in Romans 13.3. You can also find that in Galatians 6.10, 1 Peter 3.11, and John 5.29. Paul also tells us in Romans that we are to work that which is good, Romans 2.10, Ephesians 4.28, and Ephesians 6.8. So this good, my point here is that this good is something we need to understand because we are given many commands concerning it.

We need to prove it, cling to it, do it, work it, follow after it in 1 Thessalonians 5.15, follow after that which is good. We are to be zealous of that which is good in 1 Peter 3.13. We are to imitate that which is good in 3 John 11. So you get the idea here.

This is an important subject. Can we, if called upon, pop quiz is given, define the good? Could we do it? What is the good that so many of these commands center on? We are supposed to overcome evil with it. A lot of us have a question, how can I overcome? I know there is an area where I keep failing and it is falling into a pattern and there is evil in my life.

Where is the power of God to overcome this? Well, Scripture says overcome evil with good. It would be very helpful to know what that good is. We have that overcome evil with good in Romans 12.21. Our government that we are supposed to pray for, our government is supposed to be a minister of that which is good, according to Romans 13.4. We receive the benefits, we receive those good things through Christ.

And that is Romans 10.15, Hebrews 9.11 and Hebrews 10.1. So this subject of the good that Paul has now introduced here in Romans 8.28, God works all things together for that good. And we are to pursue it and cling to it. We are going to do a brief study on that which is good and then we will finish Romans 8.28 and we might even get into Romans 8.29 next time.

But you can see that we are in a part of this letter where we are going to slow down and look closely because Paul has built up to this for seven full chapters and this is the heart of the matter. He has shown the deficiencies of a system of righteousness based on works, a system of righteousness where people measure it by what you do and what they can see. And he said the

righteousness that God is looking for is on the inside and this thing which is good is addressing that very subject.

So we are at the very heart of the matter here and so we will slow down and be sure we have a good understanding of it as we continue. Let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, we thank you for the truth of your word.

We thank you for the privilege that we have of being ministered to by your spirit and of having these things in a form that is accessible and having so much scholarship and research that has been done. We have Bibles, we have so many different translations, we have so many different study aids and helps and an environment free from persecution and free from affliction. We have complete freedom to pursue an understanding of your plan and your purpose for us.

We pray that our study this evening and the truth that we glean throughout our experience will become a part of the resources in our soul, that God the Holy Spirit will use these things to transform us and to thoroughly equip us for every good work so that our lives will reflect the glory of our Savior Jesus Christ. We ask it in his name. Amen.