

**MADE NEW: New Focus<sup>i</sup>**  
**Ephesians 1:15-23**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Good morning, Trinity! It is so good to see you today. My name is Chris Wigley, I'm one of the pastors here at Trinity. If you are a first-time guest, we are just thrilled to have you with us today. We'd love the opportunity to get to know you a little bit. You can provide information to us by texting the keyword, TBCMP, which stands for Trinity Baptist Church Mount Pleasant, to the number 94-000. When you send that keyword, a link will be sent back to you and that will take you to a form that is less than a minute to fill out. When you click "submit," it notifies me, and I always look forward to following up with our guests each week.

If text messaging isn't your thing, please swing by our information center located in the fellowship area, right out these doors in the lobby. We have a gift there for you just as a way of saying thank you for being our guest today. Again, we are thrilled you have chosen to worship with us today.

**SERIES OVERVIEW:**

Last week we launched a new teaching series called Made New. Over the course of the summer, we are going to study the New Testament book of Ephesians. And one of the major themes throughout Paul's letter is the idea of being made new. Last week we looked at how we have a new identity in Christ. Today we are going to look at how we have a new focus.

So, I want to invite you to grab your bibles and turn with me in your New Testament to Ephesians. We are going to be in chapter 1 and work through verses 15-23 today.

**OPENING ILLUSTRATION: Vision<sup>ii</sup>**

For a long time, I have enjoyed 20/20 vision. I have never had the need to wear glasses or have contacts for any reason. I was one of those guys that when you had to look into the reader for your driver's license, you know, I would ask to read at least the line below the requirement. I was just blessed with good eyesight. Until a couple years ago.

About two years ago, I woke up one morning, went about my day, made my way to the office, opened up my bible to get to work, and realized that someone

changed out my bible for one that had blurry words. So, I squinted, rubbed my eyes, and worked hard to focus on the words on the page. Now, I will turn 46 next week, and for 44 years of my life, I never had any experience like I had that day. I mean, it was like I went to bed with perfect vision and woke up the next morning and couldn't read. Anyone have that experience?

So, my family and I have had the opportunity to become friends with a couple local eye doctors. So, not long after I had my blurry reading occurrence, I ran into one of my eye doctor friends. I mentioned to him that I might need to set up an appointment. I was having trouble focusing my eyes. To which he said, "No need to set up an appointment. Go buy some cheap reading glasses."

So, I went and bought some reading glasses, 1.25 magnification, I put them on, and whoa, my 20/20 vision returned! Fast forward to today and I am now using them to read my notes as I preach.

The problem was not with the print of my bible, or the print of my notes. It was not in the need to have better lighting. The problem was the weakening of my eye muscles due to my age. I was having trouble focusing on what I needed to focus on. I needed a tool to help my focus.

Well, in verses 15-23 of Ephesians 1, Paul is telling us the same thing. He is saying that, because of our new life in Christ, we ought to have a new focus. Our focus should shift from our old identity to our new identity. Our focus should shift from what we can do in our flesh to what we can do in the Spirit. We no longer focus on the trials and tribulations we endure, but we focus on the power at work in and through us. And the way Paul shifts focus is by praying. In fact, this section of Ephesians provides for us one of the longer prayer sections in Paul's letters.

Jesus modeled prayer in the gospels and the New Testament writers taught believers how to pray. Prayer is essential to spiritual health and vitality and is itself the key to shifting our focus in our new life in Christ. In verses 17 and 18, Paul prays that we might have the Spirit of wisdom and revelation and that the eyes of our hearts might be enlightened. In other words, that we would gain a new focus, and that focus be prayer.

I heard a pastor once say, "Prayer is a declaration of dependence upon God."<sup>iii</sup> Prayer is the best way to gain a new focus. It is the single most powerful tool

that helps believers to take their eyes off the things of this world and focus on the King of Glory. There are in our passage of study this morning, 4 focal points of prayer that I want to share with you. The Passion of prayer, the Person of prayer, the Purpose of prayer, and the Power of prayer. Passion, person, purpose and power. Let's jump in by first examining...

### 1) The Passion of Prayer.

What is it that motivates Paul to pray this prayer. You read along in your copy of God's Word, Ephesians 1:15 and 16. ***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.*

A couple of key words here that point to Paul's passion in prayer. The phrase, "For this reason," and "I do not cease." "For this reason" draws our attention to what we talked about last week. Because of who we are in Christ, and because we have been given every spiritual blessing, verse 3, our passion for prayer is fueled.

Romans 5:2 says, *"2*Through him [through Christ] *we have also obtained access* [access to what? Almighty God Himself] *by faith into this grace in which we stand.*" The writer of Hebrews says in 4:16, *"16*Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*"* How do we draw near to God? By way of prayer and communion with Him.

Paul also says that he is encouraged by the love that God's people have toward one another. Look at verse 15 again. *15*For this reason, because I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and ***your love toward all the saints.*** Not only had he heard of their faith but also their love for one another. When you truly love others, you will be compelled to pray for them.

Ultimately what Paul is saying is that the ability to approach God Himself coupled with a genuine love for fellow believers, results in relentless prayer. He says in verse 16, *"16***I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.**"

Beloved, never cease in praying. The God of universe has invited us into His throne room to lay our requests before Him. God says in 1 Peter 5:7, *"7*casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you."

Paul says, "for this reason... I do not cease... in praying." Let me ask you a question. What is your reason to pray? What fuels your desire to never cease in praying? Because if we're honest, this is an area that we struggle in, right? But here's what I've learned; sometimes a deeper level of prayer, a deeper level of focus in our lives is triggered by times of adversity.

Paul is in prison as he writes out this very prayer. He has encountered a great deal of adversity. And while he doesn't say this clearly, perhaps another reason for his passion in prayer is a result of his circumstances. I don't think it is a stretch to say that Paul's passion in prayer has been triggered by the pain he was experiencing. Prayer is often driven by necessity.

But I can tell you that there have been times in my life where I was driven to prayer because of the circumstances I was facing. There was a time where I experienced uncertainty of my future, and what was going to play out. I didn't know what I was up against. And I was driven to prayer. In that season, I prayed like I had never prayed before. And also in that season, I experienced the power of prayer in my life like no other time in my life.

What is your reason to pray? Is it because of God's faithfulness and provision that you are driven to deepen your prayer life? Is it because of a circumstance you are facing that is causing you to spend more time on your knees? Is it a relationship that is broken that causes you to pour out your heart? What is your reason? The truth is that we all, just like Paul, have a reason to run to The Father.

The first focal point is the passion of prayer. Now, let's look at...

### 2) The Person of Prayer.

The second focal point is the person of prayer. What I mean by this is the person that receives our prayers. Paul says in verse 17 of Ephesians 1, *"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."*

When we pray, we should remember the person to whom we pray. Perhaps the reason we don't pray more than we do is because we don't fully understand who it is that hears our prayers. **Beloved, when we pray, we are evoking a response from the God of the Universe.** And the size of our prayers, and the frequency of our prayers, directly reflects the size that we think God is.

Prayer is a direct connection to God. When the writer of Hebrews encouraged us to boldly approach the throne of grace, he was saying that because of Jesus we do not need to go through another mediator. Listen, you do not need a priest or a pastor in order for your prayers to be heard by God. No! Because of the blood of Jesus, because of who you are in Christ, because of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and because of you being a child of God, you can talk directly to the God of the Universe. How awesome is that?!

The same God that created the universe, the same God provided for His people in the wilderness, the same God that calmed the raging sea, and the same God that healed people, is the same God that you and I pray to. And when we pray, we connect with the presence and power of God.<sup>iv</sup>

Now, we often think that the God of the universe can't possibly be concerned with my issues and concerns, don't we? After all, He is dealing with some major things all over the world. To borrow a line from a song, "God is big enough to rule His mighty Universe, but small enough to live within my heart."<sup>v</sup> Here's the truth, **nothing is too big, nor anything too small for God.**

Paul is wanting to give us a new focus by teaching us the passion of prayer and the person of prayer. Thirdly, ...

### 3) The Purpose of Prayer.

If God knows what we need before we ask Him, then why do we even need to pray? What is the purpose of prayer? Let's look at what Paul says. Verses 17 and 18. <sup>17</sup>*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,*** <sup>18</sup>*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.*

When Paul begins verse 17 with the word, "that," he is using a purpose clause. What is the purpose of prayer? Quite simply, that you would know God and the hope and riches that are in Him. That's what Paul says. In other words, the purpose of prayer is that we would know God more intimately.

The word translated as "knowledge" in verse 17, means knowledge based on an experience, through a first-hand relationship.<sup>vi</sup> Prayer is a vehicle by which we experience God on the deepest of levels.

It has been my experience that when I have petitioned God through fervent prayer that I understand the wisdom of God and experience the power of God in my life. Listen, theological understanding is very important to our faith, but knowing God through prayer takes our knowledge about God to an experience with God. Prayer is about revelation and having our eyes enlightened, Paul says.

When I think about this aspect of prayer, I am reminded of a particular encounter Moses had with God. After the Exodus out of Egypt, Moses went up Mt. Sinai and received the Ten Commandments from God. Well, the time Moses spent with The Lord in that case was much longer than the Israelites had anticipated. So, they gave up on Moses and The Lord and made a golden calf and started worshiping it. God saw this and told Moses to turn and look at what the people were doing. God, in that moment, said that He was going to destroy the Israelites and start over. Moses protested by way of prayer. Let's look at it. Exodus 32:10-14.

God said, <sup>10</sup>*Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them, in order that I may make a great nation of you.* <sup>11</sup>***But Moses implored the Lord his God** [that's prayer] and said, "O Lord, why does your wrath burn hot against your people, whom you have brought out of the land of Egypt with great power and with a mighty hand? <sup>12</sup>Why should the Egyptians say, 'With evil intent did he bring them out, to kill them in the mountains and to consume them from the face of the earth'? Turn from your burning anger and relent from this disaster against your people. <sup>13</sup>Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, your servants, to whom you swore by your own self, and said to them, 'I will multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have promised I will give to your offspring, and they shall inherit it forever.'"* <sup>14</sup>***And the Lord relented** from the disaster that he had spoken of bringing on his people. Some translations say God repented or changed His mind.*

Why do I bring this up? Well, I believe it was God's will all along to NOT destroy the Israelites here. But by saying that, it prompted Moses to pray. And by Moses praying, he got a glimpse of God's heart and even God's plan for redemption. I think the purpose of Moses' prayer here was not so much for God's people but for Moses. Because having God's heart for His people changed the way Moses led.

Wisdom has been defined as, “understand[ing] life from God’s perspective.”<sup>vii</sup> Well, what greater way to understand God’s perspective than through the vehicle of prayer? Paul prays that we would have our eyes enlightened. In other words, that we would gain God’s perspective.

And catch this, when we have that experience, Paul says that we come to know hope and God’s glorious riches. That’s a great purpose for prayer.

The focal points we have discussed so far is the passion of prayer, the person of prayer and the purpose of prayer. Fourthly, finally, ...

#### 4) The Power of Prayer.

Paul encourages us to shift our focus by reminding us of the power of prayer. Let’s read verses 19-23 and I want you to pick up on the power Paul mentions. *<sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his **power** toward us who believe, according to the **working** of his **great might** <sup>20</sup>that he **worked** in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, <sup>21</sup>far above all rule and authority and **power** and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the one to come. <sup>22</sup>And he put all things under his feet and gave him as head over all things to the church, <sup>23</sup>which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.*

Paul uses four different words for power in these verses.<sup>viii</sup> In other words, he is leveraging all the words at his disposal to speak of the power that resides in prayer. I want to point these out to you.

First, the word, dunamos, which is where we get the word, dynamite. It is translated as power in verses 19 and 21. It refers to the ability to accomplish something. Then he uses the word, energeia (en-er-gia), translated as working, which literally means strength. And the word kratos (kra-tos), which means might. And the final word ischios (is-khoos), which means absolute strength.<sup>ix</sup>

I want to also point out in verse 19 who this power is made available to. Look at it again. “*<sup>19</sup>and what is the immeasurable greatness of his **power toward us who believe**.* Paul wants you and I, we who are in Christ, to know the mighty, able, productive, strengthening power that is available in prayer.

In addition to using all these words, Paul gives us an example of the kind of power that is available to us. Verse 20. The kind of power *<sup>20</sup>that he worked in*

*Christ **when he raised him from the dead** and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places.* In case you didn’t get the power made available to you in the words he used, it’s the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. That’s the power made available to us in prayer.

Here’s what we need to realize, beloved. You and I are not in need of more power, we are in need of awareness of the power that is already available to us through prayer. Power to break the chains of addiction. Power to overcome temptation, strength to endure suffering, and grace for healing and hope.<sup>x</sup> In prayer we have access to the power that placed Jesus above every name and every authority. Do you believe that?

In Christ we are made new and given a new focus. 4 focal points of prayer. The passion of prayer, the person of prayer, the purpose of prayer and the power in prayer.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

As Jared and the team comes to lead us in a time of response, I want to share with you what the focal points of today’s message mean for you.

Because of the person to whom we pray, and the power that we have access to in prayer, whatever you are facing today is far beneath the supernatural surpassing greatness of the power of God. Do you need the healing power of God in your life today? Do you need the reconciling power of God in your marriage? Do you need the peace beyond comprehension power of God in your family today? Do you need the sustaining power of God in the midst of uncertainty in your life? I’m telling you, all that is available in prayer.

If you need prayer today, our elders will be here at the front and would love nothing more than to pray with you and over you this morning.

Others of you are here and you sense The Lord calling you to a relationship with Him. The power of prayer we have talked about today is only made available to those that are in Christ, those who believe Jesus as Lord and Savior of their life. Do you need Jesus today? We would love to talk to you about that this morning.

I’m going to pray, we will stand and sing, but let’s all respond. [PRAY]

## ENDNOTES:

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<sup>i</sup> Works consulted in preparation for this message: John MacArthur, *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Ephesians*, Moody Press: Chicago, 1986; Klyne Snodgrass, *The NIV Application Commentary: Ephesians*, Zondervan: Grand Rapids, 1996; Andrew T. Lincoln, *Word Biblical Commentary: Ephesians*, Word Books: Dallas, 1990; J.D. Greear, "Embrace The Mystery: Prayer for Clarity," sermon preached at Summit Church, North Carolina, February 7, 2010, accessed online: <https://summitchurch.com/message/prayer-for-clarity-ephesians-115-23>; Vance Pitman, various sermons preached at Hope Church Las Vegas, accessed online: [https://hopechurchlv.com/message\\_passages/ephesians/page/4/](https://hopechurchlv.com/message_passages/ephesians/page/4/); Jack Graham, "Much More: Empowered," sermon preached at Prestonwood Baptist Church on February 9, 2020, accessed online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zD0D-aXnrYQ>; Michael Youssef, "Discover Your Treasure House: Discover Its Sufficiency," published by Leading The Way, March 17, 2013, accessed online: <https://www.ltw.org/watch/teaching/series/discover-your-treasure-house/part-2>.

<sup>ii</sup> This personal illustration was inspired by Dr. Michael Youssef.

<sup>iii</sup> Quote from Dr. Jack Graham.

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Gene McDonald, "How Big is God," published by Gaither Music.

<sup>vi</sup> Strong's Concordance, 1922, epignósis.

<sup>vii</sup> Devotional from NIV Lifehacks Bible ebook, published by NIV, accessed online: [https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/4-ways-get-wisdom/#:~:text=Wisdom%20is%20a%20capacity%20of,\(Proverbs%204%3A5\).](https://www.thenivbible.com/blog/4-ways-get-wisdom/#:~:text=Wisdom%20is%20a%20capacity%20of,(Proverbs%204%3A5).)

<sup>viii</sup> Lincoln, page 60.

<sup>ix</sup> Strong's Concordance, 1411, 1753, 2904, and 2479.

<sup>x</sup> Phrasing taken from Jack Graham.