

Philippians Chapter 3 Part 4

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- [0 : 0 0] Amen. Evening folks. Welcome. It's good to see you. And for those visiting us for the first time, particularly, we welcome you in the name of our Lord Jesus.
- The psalmist tells us what we should do. He says, praise the Lord. Praise the name of the Lord. Praise him, you servants of the Lord, who minister in the house of the Lord.
- In the courts of the house of our God. Praise the Lord, for he is good. Sing praise to his name, for that is pleasant.
- It's good, isn't it, to sing the praises of our God. It's not a burden. No, sometimes we don't feel like coming out to church on a Sunday. It's a joy and a blessing for us whenever we do, because the Lord delights to inhabit the praises of his people.
- Our first hymn reminds us why God should be praised. Oh God, beyond all praising. In other words, he's so great. He's so wonderful. He is the one that we come and bring our praise.
- [1 : 0 6] Let's stand and sing. 23. We haven't done this for a while, but I'd like us to have a brief open time of prayer.
- So I'll lead, and then two or three others, those who feel able, lead us in prayer as well. Particularly taking up this theme of worship and praise and thanksgiving before our God.
- So let's come before him and let's bring him our continued praise. Let's pray. Lord, you are the God who is beyond words.
- The God beyond our imagination. The God beyond our wildest dreams. You are so great. So good. So marvelous. So wonderful. Lord, there aren't enough words in every language in the whole planet that can possibly describe you and explain you and give you the praise that you deserve.
- You're so amazing. But Lord, we thank you that you have made yourself known to us. You have come to us in your Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, that we might know you and enjoy you.
- [2 : 1 6] And enjoy not only singing your praises, but enjoy your nearness and your presence day by day. Thank you that you are the God who is so worthy of our thanks because everything we have you've given us.
- Life and health and strength comes from you. And, oh Lord, we pray that in this time together, that again something of your wonder, your splendor may be made known to us.
- In our singing, in our praying, in your word, oh Lord, open our eyes to see something more of just how great you are. And realizing that all your greatness and all your goodness is at work for our good, for our blessing.
- Such is the marvel of your love. Help us then in this time we pray as we come to you through Jesus who is the way, the truth and the life.
- Amen. We're going to read together from our Bibles now. And if you can grab hold of a Bible, there's some at the back if you haven't got one.

[3 : 21] And we're going to read together from Paul's letter to the church at Ephesus, Ephesians then, and chapter 1. And if you have one of the church Bibles, the red ones, it's page 1173.

Sorry, page 1173. Page 1173. We're going to read the whole of this first chapter of Paul. Remember these letters that he wrote were written to Christians.

Yes, they lived 2,000 years ago, but they had the same struggles and problems. In fact, they had many, many more than us. They lived in an empire, the Roman Empire, where they were hated and despised, where often they were imprisoned and even put to death.

And Paul writes them this letter. We're just going to read the first part of the letter, chapter 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to God's holy people in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

[4 : 37] For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, to the praise of his glorious grace, which he's freely given us in the one he loves.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding, he made known to us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment, to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ.

In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him, who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to put our hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation. When you believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession to the praise of his glory.

For this reason, ever since I heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all God's people, I've not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers.

[6 : 20] I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better.

I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, in order that you may know the hope to which he's called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people, and his incomparably great power for us who believe.

That power is the same as the mighty strength he exerted when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every name that is invoked, not only in the present age, but also in the one to come.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for his church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.

These hymn writers are quite sarcastic, aren't they? In a lovely way. Do you get that? Verse 5. Have you no words? In other words, no words to pray or talk to God.

[7 : 33] Think again. Words flow a place when you complain. Isn't that true? It drove us. When we got something to complain about, we got plenty to say. And he says, and fill your fellow creatures here with the sad tale of all your care.

There's a sense of humor, isn't there, in God's people. And yeah, we are so quick to complain. And only we were so quick, that's what he's saying, if only we were so quick to pray, bring all things to God, then we'd be able to say, look what God has done, how he's answered my prayer.

Well, I was praying a lot this afternoon, particularly at about quarter to six, because I couldn't get my sermon to print off. So I don't like to do it, but I'm going to have to use my laptop.

I'm going to put up the bike there, just for my notes. And I'm going to try not to be distracted too much by them, but I'm probably going to need them a little bit to refer to. So hopefully you've got Ephesians and chapter one in front of you, that passage we read before.

And I particularly want to pick up on verses 15 and following, which if you've got the NIV, it's got this sort of subtitle. It's there. It's not in the original. It's just there by the translators, Thanksgiving and prayer, and particularly this matter of prayer.

[8 : 45] And Paul talks about what he prays for the believers. I'm sure you're all well aware of the story of Oliver Twist, that Dickens tale, that poor little boy orphaned and put into the workhouse when he was only about nine years old.

And for many months, Oliver was there with the other poor boys. They had to work hard and they were very poorly fed. They had this sort of gruel, which is like a watery porridge.

Until one day, they drew lots. They sort of said, right, one of you has to, one of us will have to go and ask for more because we're so hungry. And poor old Oliver, he drew the lot.

He drew the shortest straw. And so he went up to the, the master, as it were, the, the, the manager of the, of the workhouse, which is a bit like a very nasty orphanage.

And, uh, with his bowl and he said, please, sir, can I have some more? And, uh, the man flew into a great rage. And, uh, there were those rich men, you see, who were there at the time.

[9 : 46] And they, they were there to, uh, uh, to feel good about themselves by giving a few pennies to care for these poor orphans. They ate like kings, but these poor little orphan boys had very little to eat.

And so, they felt very hard done to. They felt that Oliver was ungrateful for all their kindness to him. And so they chucked him out of the workhouse. And the beginning of poor old Oliver's adventures begin.

If you've never read the story, it's a, like many of Dickens' stories, it's a very hard story, isn't it? A sad story. But eventually, the good news, if, if, so you don't have to worry about it.

In the end, Oliver meets his grandfather, who takes him in and becomes cared for and loved. And they're part of our family. So there you are. Now, when we get to the prayer of Paul here in Ephesians, particularly in verses 17 and following, we get this attitude, I believe, in Paul, which is similar to that of Oliver.

Paul is asking for more. And he doesn't feel bad about it. And he's not afraid about it. He says he's constantly praying and asking that God would give to these Christians in Ephesus more.

[10 : 57] I keep asking, this is the NIV here, keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you spirit of wisdom so that you may know. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be opened.

He's asking for more. He's praying for them that they might have something more than they already have. But that sounds certainly a little bit cheeky when we read what we read there in those opening verses of chapter 3, of chapter 1 rather.

Because verses 3 and following tell us about all the blessings that God has given us. And them and every believer. Do you notice that? He's blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

And then the rest of the passage is all about Paul listing the wonderful things that God has done for us, the wonderful things that we have when we put our faith in Jesus. He's given us every spiritual blessing.

He's given us adoption to become his children or his sons. Now when the Bible talks about people becoming the sons of God, he's not, as it were, saying girls are not as good or daughters aren't as good as sons.

[12 : 05] No. He's saying that we're all on the same footing. And in those days, in Jesus' day, the sons got the inheritance. They got all the rewards. They got all the business and so on.

And he's saying, look, if you're a man or a woman, boy or girl, in Jesus you're all on the same level. You're all sons. You're all those who are going to inherit. Great blessing. And he talks about us being adopted.

He talks about us being redeemed through his blood. That means Jesus paid a price to buy us, to buy our freedom, to set us free, to know God.

Forgiveness for all our sins. The things that we know we feel bad and guilty about. The things that separate us from God. They're removed. He talks about God giving us all wisdom and understanding.

There's a great list, isn't there? Of all the things that we have in Jesus already. And then Paul says, well, I'm going to ask God for more for you.

[13 : 01] It's a bit of a nerve, isn't it? It's like waking up Christmas morning. And I imagine, sadly, that there maybe are some children who've done this. And they get their presents and they open their presents. And they say, what else have I got?

Is there anything more? But that's not the case here. Paul is not asking for more for these Christians because he thinks that they've been hard done to.

He's not asking for more like poor Oliver because all they've got from God is a bit of gruel. Something which is not all that nice. Not all that good. It's because he knows that God is generous that he's asking for more.

It's because he knows that God wants to give more to his people that he asks for more. In fact, of course, as we know, he's not asking for himself here.

He's asking for those Christians in Ephesus. But really, as we thought in these last few weeks, we're seeing an echo of his own prayer for himself, isn't it?

[14 : 02] When we looked at Philippians chapter 3, we saw there that again and again, Paul's great goal, his prize, his longing was this. I might gain Christ. That I might know Christ.

And he talks about the surpassing knowledge. In other words, the best thing of all is knowing Jesus. And so he's praying here for these Christians. Really, I think the same thing that's on his heart.

For them to know more. To enjoy more. To delight more. In the riches of what God has given them in Jesus. And I've put before you this morning and last week as well that same question.

What about you and I? Do we want more of what we've already received? Or are we comfortable? Are we content? Are we satisfied?

With what we've already got? Or is there a hunger in your soul and in your heart for more and more of Jesus? And I put to you, dear friends, I hope in a tender way, that really the proof that we are born again, the proof that we truly are Christians, the proof that we truly love Jesus and put our faith in him is that within us there's still an insatiable desire for more of him.

[15 : 14] And that if, as can be the case, we are not hungry for more of Jesus, and we are content and satisfied as we are, then it's a sign that there's something spiritually wrong with us.

It's a bit like a child at home, when they're off their food. Or when you feel off your food. Or when I feel off my food, I'm definitely unwell. But if you feel off your food or a child feels off their food, you say, there must be something wrong with them.

They're coming down. Coming down with a temperature or a cold or something. Because we know there's something not quite right. And so it is for the Christian. When we have no appetite for more of Jesus, then actually it means there's something we're not well spiritually.

We're not well. And we need to know and sort that out. We can settle, can't we, dear friends, sadly for, if I can put it this way, the basics of the Christian life.

And not enter into the fullness of all the riches and the treasures that God wants for us. There's a very famous American family back at about 100 years or so ago called the Wendells.

[16 : 22] And the father wanted to keep the fortune in the family. So he taught his family to never get married.

So he prevented his children from getting married so that nobody would get any of his money. And he kept all the money in with them. And he taught them that they should live on as little as possible. But in fact, they were fantastically rich.

So that when the last of his daughters died in 1931, it was found that although she had an estate, although she had, as it were, within the business and finances, \$100 million.

That's then in 1931. So you can only imagine how many billions that was now. She didn't have a car. She didn't have a telephone. She didn't have electricity. And she only had one dress that she had made herself and had worn for nearly 25 years.

But as Christians, you see, you can understand where I'm getting, I hope. We can say, well, you know, I've got to be frugal with Jesus. God has given me so much.

[17 : 26] I don't want to ask him for any more. But he wants us to. He wants us to. That's why Paul is praying as he does. I keep asking. I keep praying. Not because he's nagging God or trying to get God to do something he doesn't want to do.

It's not because God is measly and mean. He's exactly the opposite. He's not asking in one sense that God should give us more than he's given us in Jesus.

But he's asking God that we should be able to appreciate what we have in Jesus. He wants us to appreciate it more. To enjoy it more. To delight in it more.

It's as if God has laid out for us a wonderful, wonderful banquet. A bit like when we have a tea here at church. It's about a wonderful banquet, isn't it? And we're laden with all sorts of good things.

And it's as if Paul is praying, I really want you to dive in and tuck in and enjoy and feast. Not because we're greedy in this wrong sense, but because we're greedy in the right sense.

[18 : 32] Because we see just how good the things are that God has given us in Jesus. And we want to taste of them and enjoy them and feast on them. He wants us to experience more.

Because we can know it in our heads, can't we, dear friends? We can know all about the scriptures in our minds. We can know all about, we can talk about propitiation and atonement.

And we can talk about the big words of the Bible. And we can tell people what they mean. And we can explain all about them. But dear friends, it may be that we know nothing of the power of them. Nothing of the enjoyment of them.

A bit like a great cookery book, you know, written by one of these great cooks. And I, you know, writing down all these recipes and all these things. And then writing at the end, but I don't like to eat very much.

No. All these things are there. So what is it that Paul is praying for? What is it he asking for? Particularly, that's what I want us to think and pick up. Because I think as we see what he prays for, it will help us in our prayer life as what we should pray for.

[19 : 36] What is it that we are wanting? Remember when we looked at Philippians 3, Paul talked about pressing on and straining after and forgetting what is behind. And we talked about the importance, as it were, as he said, of making losses that we might have gains.

But what is the pressing on? Well, we talked about that in a certain amount. That it's being where God's people are. It's reading God's word. But part of it must be the prayer. Prayer is one of the hardest things that we have.

That's one of the hardest things for Christians to do. But when we are hungry, when we are earnest, when we are desperate for more, then we'll pray more. And that's what Paul is praying for here.

So what's he praying for them? Look at verse 17, first of all. He's praying that the glorious Father may give you the spirit of wisdom and revelation so that you may know him better.

Now, no one can know God apart from God making himself known to them. You know what I mean?

[20 : 39] No matter how clever you are, no matter how much you study the Bible, no matter how hard you work, no matter how many books you read or how many web pages you go on, you can never understand God until God makes himself known to you.

If you think that God can be found, and people talk about, oh, I found God, or I've discovered God, or I'm working to find out what God is. If we're trusting in our own ability or thinking that we can be taught about these things by our own selves or by others, then we're always going to get it wrong.

The Bible makes it clear that only God can make himself known. In fact, he says this in another letter of Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 1.

He says, That's true.

Wherever you go around the world, there are people who will talk about God and say they believe in a God, but their God is the God of the tree or the God of the monkey or the God of the river. Wherever you go, people have their own views and ideas of God, and people say, well, surely they must have something right.

[21 : 54] No, they don't. Because as soon as we try to work out God with our own small pea-sized brains, we will get it wrong. And that's why we have such a diversity of religions in the world, where on the whole we have people saying, this is what I think God is like.

That's why as Christians, we have to say, we haven't worked out what God is like. We haven't discovered God. He's made himself known to us in his son, Jesus Christ.

God is the one who's come to us and said, this is what I'm like. And when you read the gospel and you read the life of Jesus, you can't get away from the conclusion. That's God walking on the pages of the New Testament.

That's God meeting with and reacting with and changing the lives of people. God has given us his Holy Spirit so that we can know him.

And it's only by his Holy Spirit that we can. Not through religion. Not through good deeds. That's why Paul goes on just a bit later in that same letter, 1 Corinthians, this time chapter 2.

[23 : 02] He says, Who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the spirit of God.

What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the spirit who is from God so that we may understand what God has really given us.

Being a Christian is not following a set of rules, not attending a particular place, not doing this or that. Being a Christian is someone whose God's spirit has come to dwell within them.

The Bible calls about it being born again or a new creation. It's a transformed heart and mind to see God and know God as he's revealed himself in Jesus. Now, so Paul is not asking here then in his prayer, I want you to be more intellectually savvy.

I want you to have a more advanced way of thinking. No, I want you to know God better. I want you to know God better. That's not the same.

[24 : 04] He wants a better relationship between us and God. Not a better exam results. I want you to know him better. Remember again how Paul expressed his desire and his heart cry in Philippians 3, verse 10.

I want to know Christ. Like every Christian, Paul knew Christ. Of course he did. He'd come into this wonderful place of faith in Christ and this wonderful knowledge of Christ's love for him.

But once you taste Jesus, you've got to have more of Jesus. You're not satisfied with a little of Jesus.

And that's not just what the New Testament teaches. That's a whole other way through the Bible. Think of that lovely psalm, Psalm 42, where David is praying. He says, as the deer pants, gasps for the streams of water.

So my soul pants for you, my God. That's what he felt about God. Just like a deer which has been running or an animal or even a person been exercising, exercising.

[25 : 12] And they're thirsty, thirsty, thirsty. Only water will quench their thirst. He says, that's how I feel inwardly about you, God. I'm so thirsty for more of you.

I know that you're the one who refreshes my soul. I know you're the one who reaches those parts that nothing else can reach. And it's God's pleasure.

It's God's desire for us to yearn in that way. God wants us to want these things because he wants to give them to us. Remember how Jesus put it in Luke in chapter 6.

Blessed are those who hunger now, for they will be satisfied. Jesus promised and said, whoever thirsts, out of him will flow rivers of living water.

Talking about the Holy Spirit. So that's the first part of his prayer. That we should know him better. God himself, personally.

[26 : 06] Not just what he's done. But then he goes on for a second part of his prayer. Verse 18. I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened.

In order that you may know the hope to which he's called you. The riches of his glorious inheritance in his holy people. So first of all, he wants them to appreciate who God is more.

To enjoy him more. To delight in him more. But then there's an aspect of it here which goes on from the person to the promises. To the blessings. He says, I want your eyes of your heart to be enlightened in order that you might know.

That they might appreciate what God has promised them. What God has said he will do for them. And he calls it the hope to which he has called you. And he enlarges upon that phrase by saying that this hope is the inheritance.

Sorry. This hope is the glorious inheritance. Or the riches of his glorious inheritance. Why has God saved you?

[27 : 17] Why has God gone to so much trouble in sending his son to live and to suffer and to die? To rise again and be ascended. Why has he sent his spirit into your heart?

So that you become a Christian and faith in him. Why has God done all that? Has he done it only that we should be rescued from judgment? Only that we should be spared the consequence and the penalty for our sins in living contrary to him.

Not just that. But so much more besides. God has called us and saved us that we might be part of his family so that we should inherit something glorious.

That we should have a wonderful reward. A reward like nothing else in this world. That not the greatest millionaire or the greatest lottery winner could ever afford or could ever contemplate.

Something which is absolutely marvelous. Now many of us as Christians know this. As Christians we know that we have this wonderful heavenly reward we might say.

[28 : 24] We have this wonderful place where we shall be with God forever and enjoy him. And the treasures of all his kingdom will be ours. We know this. But we tend to forget it.

We tend to forget it. We get bogged down in life's stickiness and mud. You know what it's like when you've walked. Sometimes it happens if you walk in the harbor.

And you get when the tide is low. And even if you've got welly boots on. In the harbor where sort of the silty mud is. It's really hard. You can try running. You're trying to pull yourself along.

And in life itself we can feel as if our feet are stuck in the mud. I like that noise. It's a good noise, isn't it? Anyway, nothing like that. We can feel bogged down.

We can feel stuck. We can feel as if we're just making any progress. And we forget the great hope and the great inheritance that is ours in Christ. We just see everything as it were down in the mud.

[29 : 19] Down in the low tide. We look at people who seem to have it all in the world. We become jealous or envious of them.

We become fearful and anxious when that large red bill comes through the letterbox. We're tempted to be less than honest with our tax returns.

Or just perhaps to put a little flutter on the horses or the sport or the lottery. In other words, we're trying to lay up for ourselves treasures on earth.

Because we've forgotten about the treasures in heaven. That's what Paul is saying here. I want your heart. Do you notice he talks about your heart? Not your mind. The eyes of your heart.

The heart is the very center of all that we are. It's the very center of our personality. It's us, as it were. It's not just the brain.

[30 : 17] It's not just the emotion. It's us. He says, I want you, deep down, to know, to see, to recognize what God has called you to. That you are a person of hope in a hopeless world.

That you are a person of riches in an impoverished world. That you are a person who has something glorious in an ordinary world. And that's what he prays for them.

So there's this going on. Yes, it's more of Jesus we want. But as we find out more about Jesus and we grow to love him more, then we realize all that he has in his heart in store for us.

I can put it into my own words. This is what the sort of prayer, the sense in which Paul is getting at here. I want you to know deep down in your very being that to this you've been called by God.

I want you to grasp, as you've previously not been able to do so before, that you are headed for glory. That you are the richest person in the world. You have a vast and eternal inheritance coming your way, which puts even the most awesome riches of this present passing world into the shade.

[31 : 31] In fact, by comparison, they are about as worth pursuing as a piece of dust in your eye. That's what he's praying. Do you know that, dear friend?

Do you have that assurance, that confidence? Do you think about these things regularly? Because as we do, we find that there's a drawing from them.

There's a feeding upon them. There's a refreshing from them. Don't get stuck in the mud. Rather run the race set before you.

Then Paul prays something else. Really, it's the same sort of prayer, but it's just taking it a step further. And, he says, verse 19, he's incomparably great power for us who believe.

That's part of this opening up of our hearts, that the eyes of our hearts may be enlightened to the power that he has for us. It's a similar vein. I wonder how you felt when we were looking at Philippians 3, and I was talking about pressing and straining and every sinew and every desire.

[32 : 37] But, was there a sense of, that sounds so tiring. That sounds so exhausting. I don't think I've got the energy. And there can be times as well, can't there, for us as believers, where we seem to be running the race so well, and then we, again, get just a bit stuck in the mud, or we get diverted off, and we feel, Lord, I don't know if I'm ever going to make the end.

I don't know if I'm ever going to reach the goal. I'm so tired and weary in well-doing, or whatever it may be. Well, Paul's prayer is this. He wants us, again, to take our eyes off ourselves, take our eyes off this world, and refocus ourselves upon him, and upon who he is, and what he is in store for us, and how he's going to get us there, because it's by his power, not our own.

His strength, not our own. He's saying, in one sense, I'm praying that you might not lose heart, that somehow you shall fall, or fail to reach this goal.

But I want you to rest upon the one thing that makes everything possible, the power of God working for your benefit. It's, again, not that he's praying that you should have power, because he's openly saying, you've got the power, but you need to know that you've got the power.

See, it's all well and good looking at those riches and treasures, but if we don't have the confidence that they're one day going to be ours, we're a bit like children at the shop window, pressing our noses against the glass, wishing that we could have that remote-controlled car, all those suites, whatever it is, but knowing that it's always out of our reach.

[34 : 20] That's not how God is. He doesn't dangle carrots in front of us or say there's something wonderful and marvelous for you, but really you're never going to get it. He assures us, and he wants us to know that by his power, and Paul uses four words here, but there are two pairs of words, really, to talk about power, when he talks about the power of God, and notice that.

It's incomparably great power for us who believe. So it's for every Christian. It doesn't say for us who are conquerors, and us who are super Christians, and us who are leaders in the church, and us who are apostles, those who believe.

Do you believe in Jesus? That's you. You're included. This incomparably great power is for you. Two different words, which we get two different English words for.

The first one is the word, it particularly comes out, verse 20, exerted. Exertion. It gets from the word energy. The energy to empower us.

And then there's another word there, which we have as the word power, particularly, but remember, when we read the English translation, it's not exactly as the Greek, because their way of writing was different to us.

- [35 : 39] The words didn't come in the same order as ours. So when we've got the English, we've got this translation helping us to see and understand what's behind God's word, and what is it. And it is God's word. But this word power is the word we get dynamo, and dynamic, and dynamite.

It's those words here. But notice how Paul doesn't just say his power for us who believe. God's power by itself would be mind-blowing. God's power is the power that spoke the world, the universe, into being.

Notice he adds to it these adjectives, incomparably great power. That word great is the word we get mega. Mega power.

Mega bomb. And incomparably is part of the word hyper. Something which is supernatural. So he's talking about this mega, super, hyper power.

You can imagine a bit like getting a kid's comic, you know, with Superman. He's got super, hyper power. Do you know what I mean? But this is talking about God's power. And what Paul is really doing is this.

- [36 : 45] He's saying, words aren't enough to describe the power of God that is at work for you and in you. He's stretching the limits, isn't he, Paul, of his language.

He's saying this is power which is beyond imagination. This is power which is so great, and it's power for you. It's the power of God for you so that you can be all that God wants you to be.

So that you can reach the goal. So that you can enjoy the inheritance. So you can reach heaven one day. It's that sort of power that God is working in you so as to fulfill his promises and plans for every single Christian.

And in one sense what he says just as we bring this to a close is this. If you're trying hard to get your head around just how amazing this power is, I want you to remind you of the most powerful and amazing thing that God did.

It wasn't the creation of the universe. Marvelous that it is. Notice verse 20. He exerted this same mighty strength and power when he raised Christ from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms far above rule and authority power and dominion.

- [38 : 02] He's not just saying this is the same power that was exerted in the dead body of Jesus so that he rose again from the dead. Yes it's that power. But it's more than that power. It's the power that took him from earth back to heaven when he ascended before the disciples.

It's that power. But it's more power than that. It's the power that raised him from the dead and raised him to heaven and seated him in the place of all authority all power and governance and rule over every other power in the world.

See what he's trying to do? We're thick aren't we? And Paul is saying I'm praying that God would as it were press this truth into your thick skull.

My thick skull. Not yours of course. You all know this already. That this hyper mega power which God worked in the life of the Lord Jesus to bring him to the place where he is today with all authority and power is that same power that is at work for you and in you and with you.

Yes we are dear friends to seek after more of Jesus. Yes we are to know him better. Yes we are to strain. Yes we are to sacrifice.

- [39 : 22] Yes we are to throw off those things that hinder us but we're not to do it in our own strength or our own energy but we're to do it with the power that God has given us that we might strain towards the goal.

Do you understand why Paul is praying in the way that he prays? Do you see dear friends how we need to pray like this for one another?

It's so easy isn't it to fall into the trap of thinking everybody else in the church doesn't need that power it's just me. Everybody else has got it sorted out.

Everybody else is going on with God great guns. It's just me that needs it. I know lots of you and even the ones I don't I can tell you this you're struggling because I'm struggling you're finding it tough at times because I'm finding it tough at times you want more of this power you want more of this love for Jesus you want more of this better relationship you want it and you think that it's not possible and Paul is praying that we should know that it is possible and more than that it's not just possible it's a reality because this is God's power for those who believe that we might obtain the goal win the prize which Christ called us heavenward.

Let's sing together a wonderful hymn a wonderful hymn that talks about just how amazing is Jesus this one that we are seeking after more and more immortal honors rest on Jesus' head my Lord my God my living bread and then there's that wonderful verse in verse 3 my every need he which he will supply nor will his mercy ever let me die in him there dwells a treasure all divine and listen matchless grace has made that treasure mine so let's stand and sing 154 praise be to the God and Father our Lord Jesus Christ in his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead and into an inheritance that can never perish spoil or fade this is kept in heaven for you who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time

[42 : 17] Amen Amen God bless you Lord Jesus Christ