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## **“Paul’s Prayer”**

January 19, 2025

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Opening Praise New Chant No. 197 “Let Us Prayerful Gardeners

### **Scripture Eph. 1:15-19**

**1:15 For this reason I have heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 1:16 and I give thanks continually for you and remember you in my prayers.**

**1:17 Please pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him.**

**1:18 And that the eyes of your hearts may see clearly, what hope is given you by the calling of God, and how glorious is the inheritance of the saints,**

**1:19 And that you may know how great is the excellency of the power of God which works in us who believe by the working of His almighty power.**

### Introduction

Dear church members, it has been a long time. To all newcomers, my name is Seino, and I was a pastor until five years ago. Please give me your best regards. Since it is the New Year, let us take to heart a scripture that is appropriate for the New Year. It is the prayer of the Apostle Paul.

The same prayer is found at the beginning of the books of Philipians and Colossians, so it seems that this was the usual prayer of the Apostle Paul when he prayed in memory of the believers of the various churches. In other words, this is the prayer that the Apostle Paul prayed daily for the saints of Megumi Church, that is, for us. In other words, this is what God expects us to do. Let us keep in mind the content of the prayer.

First of all, a greeting.

**Eph. 1:15 Therefore, when I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus and your love for all the saints, 1:16 I give thanks continually for you and remember you in my prayers.**

Knowing the faith and love of the saints of Tsuchiura Megumi Church, I give thanks and pray for them. It is a little bit embarrassing, but I am glad.

The first prayer is:

**1, 1:17 Please God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, grant you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation to know Him.**

May all of you who gather at Megumi Church come to know better and better the great and glorious God, the Creator of all things, full of mercy. That was Dr. Paul's daily prayer. He wants us to know more and more deeply the merciful God the Father who is promised by the Lord Jesus. To advance there, he would like to meditate on a poem by a Japanese Christian poet named Shigekichi Yagi.

Yagi Shigekichi was born in Machida, Tokyo, in 1898, 120 years ago. He became a Christian while attending Tokyo Higher Normal School (the predecessor of Tsukuba University). After graduation, he became an English teacher in Kobe, married and had a son and a daughter. Around that time, he began writing poetry.

After his death, several collections of poems were published. These include "Poor Believer," "Yagi Shigekichi Poetry Collection," "Yagi Shigekichi Faith Poetry Collection, Let's Call God," and others from Chikuma Shobo and other publishers. Just recently, I came across this poem.

When Jesus gently touched his hand, the water turned to wine.

And the wedding feast became lively.

When he put his hand on the blind man's eye and Christ said, "Open.

Immediately his eyes were healed.

A man who could not move his hand because it was limp asked Christ to touch him and said, “Now you are healed,

And when Christ touched him and said, “Now you are healed,” his hand immediately moved again,

His hand immediately began to move well.

According to the Bible, 2,000 years ago, a blind eye was healed. The Lord Jesus also healed a shriveled hand when He touched it. Since then, countless people have experienced similar wonders.

It was a high school student. I was a high school student who was depressed because of my own inadequacies. I was disgusted by the filthiness of society. I saw the filthy darkness of human society and was disappointed in human beings. Therefore, I could not find the meaning of life and felt the emptiness of life. But when the Lord Jesus gently touched my hand, I changed. When Jesus gently touched his hand, he himself changed.

That high school student was me. Certainly, the change took place not in the people around me, but in me. Not everything changed. But something inside of me changed. Then my life as a Christian began.

This poem expresses the poet’s excitement and expectation of God. There is a childlike longing and trust in the Lord Jesus. With this longing and trust, I want to look up to the Lord Jesus and go on. I want to be gently touched by the Lord Jesus and experience quiet gratitude and joy that makes me want to sing. Let us walk in anticipation of the wonder of the God of glory this year.

2, The next prayer is:

**1:18 And that the eyes of your hearts may see clearly, what hope is given you through the calling of God, and how glorious is the inheritance of the saints,**

Dr. Paul is praying. I want each one of you to know what wonderful promises and hopes God has given you. One of those promises and hopes is God who always accompanies us.

Shigekichi Yagi was transferred from Kobe to a junior high school in Kashiwa, Chiba Prefecture. Six months later, however, he was diagnosed with tuberculosis and admitted to a hospital in Chigasaki. At the time, this was close to a death sentence. He retired from teaching and began recuperating, but continued to write poetry. His body weakened rapidly and he was soon on absolute bed rest. He died in October 1927, a year and a half after being hospitalized. He was only 29 years and 8 months old. In such a state of inability to move, he probably wrote this poem. The following poem remains.

I was pushed down and dangled in the air

Have you ever thought that you are alone with Christ?

“Pushed aside and hanging in the air...”

When I heard these words, a scene from Eiji Yoshikawa’s “Musashi Miyamoto” came to my mind. Musashi was a philosophical swordsman, but in his youth, he was once punished by the villagers for being rowdy. He was caught, tied to a metal chain, and hung from a tall tree. All the villagers turned their backs on him, and no one would help him. Hanging in midair, is that the kind of situation where you can’t do anything?

There are times in our lives when we do not have to lie down with an illness. It may be a time when you cannot sleep because you are suffering from an unreasonable and irrational pain that you do not understand. It may be a time when you are betrayed and beaten down by your fellow man, and you despair of mankind. It may be a time when we feel that others are turning their backs on us, as if they hate us. You may have shut yourself away, not wanting to see anyone, hating the frivolous words of others. It must be a time when you feel as if you are dangling in the air, alone and helpless.

It is such a time of total solitude. In fact, it was then that the poet realized that Christ was there. He recalls that the bliss of being alone with Christ was not when he was surrounded by trusted companions and laughter came spilling out, but when he was pinned down and hanging in the air. I was alone with Christ when I was completely alone, when there was nothing I could do. It must have been such a blissful time that it made him forget his pain. The poet asked,

“Have you ever felt alone with Christ when you were pushed down and dangling in the air?”

If so, in your daily walk this year, even if you feel suddenly pushed away from the path and dangling in midair, don't just think about running away from the situation. Rather than rushing around trying to escape, trying to escape, desperately rushing around saying, “I have to do something, I have to do something,” let us listen to the voice of the Lord Jesus who is right beside us. And this year, let us enjoy the bliss of being alone with Christ.

The third prayer is:

**1:19 And that the eyes of your hearts may be made clear to you by the working of the almighty power of God, so that you may know what hope God gives by His calling, and how glorious is the inheritance of the saints.**

He also prays that you may know what great power is given to those who believe in God and in the daily life of the believer. He repeats how, how glorious is the inheritance of the saints, how great is God's superior power, what hope God gives through His calling. Paul wanted all Christians to know how great and how rich and how wonderful the grace of God is, and he wanted all Christians to experience that joy to the depths of their being.

So what should we aim for and walk toward in order to live and experience God's great power in our daily lives? Let me introduce another verse that says, “Let the eyes of your heart see clearly,” which means not only to see God, but also to gaze at Him and see even His will.

O God, all my strength!

I want to see God, not just look at him, but to see his will.

Let my gratitude to you be one power.

This is a prayer to feel God's beauty, to thank God even more, and to concentrate so hard that we cannot hear the noise around us. In fact, for thousands of years, mankind has been commanded to do so.

**Deut. 6:4 Hear, O Israel! Israel. The Lord is our God. There is only one LORD.**

**Deut. 6:5 Love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.**

**6:6 Engrave in your heart these words that I command you today.**

Fervently concentrate, listen to the voice of God, and whisper the deepest thoughts of your heart. To continue to do so will be too long for the Lord Jesus like a little child and to trust in God.

Autumn, Thinking of God

I just want to go on and on and on,

A heart that is infinitely clear

Seeking for an infinitely warm heart

It is not a pretense or a bluff, but a clear heart. It is a prayer from the depths of the poet's heart. It is not hubris or arrogance, but a true and warm heart. When spoken in such beautiful Japanese, I realize that I have not yet attained such a beautiful thing. I feel that it has not yet dwelt within me. So this year, I am going to talk with the Lord Jesus alone and walk toward this place every day.

It is possible at any time, on the train, anywhere, in the kitchen or in the study hall, in any situation, when praising, when lying sick, in the very predicament in which I am hanging in the air. It is to be alone with the Lord Jesus and talk with Him. Finally, I would like to introduce another poem by Shigekichi Yagi, loved by many Christians.

I want to build a path for my prayer,

I want to make a path of my prayer.

Let us pray

Father, I am amazed that you have been praying for 2000 years. I thank you that what we have now is the result of that accumulated prayer. We have

begun to walk in the 2025 year of the origin of the Lord Jesus. As you are still praying, I want to be able to see clearly with the eyes of my heart, as you expect me to do, and to taste what hope you give me through your calling, and how glorious is the inheritance of the faithful. Let us experience the depth of Your grace in our walk this year. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Responsorial Praise Chant 594 “Still More Grace”

Benediction: Ephesians 1:19 May you know how great is the excellent power of God that works in us who believe by the working of his almighty power.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the mercy of God the Father, and the intimate fellowship of God the Holy Spirit be abundant and unlimited.