

An 'A to Z' for Suffering Servants

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[0:00] Good. Let's turn to our reading for this evening and Phil Copeland's preaching to us from Psalm 25.! So do grab a Bible. We have visitor Bibles scattered around, so do grab one if you need.

And if you have a visitor Bible, you'll find that on page 459. So Psalm 25, page 459. And we'll read the whole psalm this evening. So Psalm 25, beginning verse 1.

Of David, to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. O my God, in you I trust. Let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies exalt over me. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame.

They shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous. Make me to know your ways, O Lord. Teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation.

For you I wait all the day long. Remember your mercy, O Lord, and your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

[1:23] Remember not the sins of my youth or my transgressions. According to your steadfast love, remember me. For the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore he instructs sinners in the way. He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble his way.

All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies. For your name's sake, O Lord, pardon my guilt, for it is great.

Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him will he instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being and his offspring shall inherit the land.

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him and he makes known to them his covenant. My eyes are ever toward the Lord, for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

[2:33] Turn to me and be gracious to me, for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged. Bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction and my trouble and forgive all my sins.

Consider how many are my foes and with what violent hatred they hate me. O God, my soul, and deliver me. Let me not be put to shame, for I take refuge in you.

May integrity and uprightness preserve me, for I wait for you. Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles. Amen.

May God bless his word to us tonight. Well, good evening, and please have your Bibles open to Psalm 25.

That would be really helpful. Excuse me.

[3:47] That was just to make sure you were still awake. I coughed anyway. Well, when the church comes under fire from the enemies of the gospel, how are we to pray?

And when we are deeply conscious of our own folly and our own failings before the Lord, how are we to pray as believers in Christ today? Well, Psalm 25 will help us.

Long time ago now, I was at a birthday party where the father of the birthday girl read out a poem that he had written about his daughter.

And it was pretty memorable because it was written as an acrostic. That is, every verse of the poem began with a letter, successive letter, of the girl's name.

So Claire was her name. I've not seen Claire for many years, but anyway. Her first verse in her poem began with C. The next verse began with L. The next began with A.

[4 : 46] And so on. And friends, in the Bible there are a number of acrostic poems in which each section begins with a successive letter of the Hebrew alphabet. And Psalm 25 is one of those acrostic poems.

It is why I've called this an A to Z. A to Z for suffering servants. Because in this Psalm, David is crying out to the Lord in great, deep anguish for help.

Because he's surrounded by hostility and opposition. David is being blasted from enemies without, from without. And at the same time, he's also painfully aware of the enemy in here, within his ongoing sin.

And in response to all of this pressure, he cries out to the Lord for help. Now we'll think a bit more about that in a minute. But before then, please look at verse 22.

Right at the very end of the Psalm. It says this. Now why do I draw your attention to that?

[5 : 57] Well, this verse is not part of the structure. It's not part of the A to Z poem. We're out of the alphabet at the end. This little verse sticks out emphatically from the rest of the Psalm.

And actually, I take it that this verse is teaching something very simple. Verse 22. David is saying, Lord, all of these things that I've just prayed for myself, all the petitions that I have made, all the requests, please, Lord, do them for all the rest of your people.

In other words, verse 22 is encouraging us to see this Psalm as a model prayer. That you and I, as the people of God, even today, in the Lord Jesus, we can pray when we find ourselves under fire.

This is not David's private prayer. It's a prayer for all of the Lord's people throughout all ages. As someone once said, what the Psalm depicts about the need of the King, King David, is the same kind of need that the whole covenant people, the whole church, so often have today.

So then let's look at this model prayer, this A to Z, for suffering servants and more debts. And I want to look at this under three headings this evening. Here's the first thing that we see.

[7 : 14] The pressure felt by a suffering servant. The pressure felt by a suffering servant. And that's actually all over this Psalm.

When I was younger, even younger than when I attended Claire's birthday party, I'd often sit with my grandfather, who's one of my heroes in life, and I would quiz him about his time fighting in the Second World War.

And he told me about a time, one time in particular, it really stuck with me, when he was out on night patrol with the rest of his troops. And something went really wrong, which I can't remember.

But he got cut off from the rest of the patrol. And as he was trying to find the rest of his troops, he ran into the enemy. And they started firing on him. And he ran, he fled, just about getting away.

And he found refuge in an abandoned farmyard, farm building nearby. And as he hid there in the pitch black, he told me that all he could hear outside of the property were the voices of the enemy.

[8 :17] And they were all saying the same sorts of stuff, which is that they were hunting for my grandfather. He was surrounded and being hounded. And that is David's situation here. In verse 2, he says he's under fire from those who want to exalt over him and to see him being shamed publicly. In verse 3, they've dealt with David in a treacherous way. In verse 15, they've tried to entrap David. That's what it means when he talks about a net being set for his feet. He feels like he's already standing in it. In verse 19, David says that there are many of these foes, not just some, a couple, many. And they hate him. With not just any old hatred, with violent hatred. But friends, that was not a rare situation for David. As the Lord's anointed king, he was pretty much always opposed by those who hated the Lord and his kingdom. Just go home tonight on your own time. And pick up any psalm that talks about suffering written by David. You'll see this theme. But Psalm 2 leaves it out really clearly. You'll see that the nations and the leaders of nations, they were constantly plotting and scheming against him and the Lord.

[9 :36] But also most tragically, do you know where most of this hostility came from at David? The answer is within Israel. Within the professing people of God. Those members of Israel who in their hearts really were unbelievers and did not know the Lord at all. They too were a great source of hostility to David. And just run your eye over verse 7. David says to the Lord, Remember not the sins of my youth. Now that implies that David here, he's not a young man as he says these words. He's not the voice of a youth here. Most definitely a mature man, maybe a senior man in his years as he writes. It could well have been that he was going through that awful, horrific time recorded at the end of 2 Samuel when his own son, his own child, Absalom, turned against him and sought to hunt him down. So even in his senior years, David was being hunted by enemies simply because he belonged to the Lord. Friends, the life of faith, there is no guarantee things will get easier as you get older.

[10 :52] And of course, David is not so simple that he thinks his only trouble is out there on the outside. He doesn't make the mistake of forgetting the traitor within. Throughout this psalm, David keeps his own failure, his own sin in front of him as well. What's going on in his heart? So as we've seen in verse 7, he speaks of the sins of my youth, my transgressions, the wrongs he'd done against God in the past. Then in verse 8, he speaks about his guilt. This is in the present day that needs to be pardoned. Oh, sorry. No, not verse 8. Sorry, that's verse 11. Aha. Verse 8, he speaks about himself as a sinner in the present who needs to be taught how to live in response to Lord's grace. In verse 11, that's where he speaks of his guilt, which is great. Do you notice that? Great guilt. Not great as in it's positive. It's great as in it feels colossal. It's weighing him down. He needs pardoned. In verse 18, he speaks about his sins that need to be forgiven.

[12 :00] David is a man under serious pressure from without and from within. And what is all of this pressure doing to David? Well, listen to him. Listen to verse 16. Please look at verse 16. He says to the Lord, Turn to me and be gracious to me for I am lonely and afflicted. The troubles of my heart are enlarged. Bring me out of my distress. Consider my affliction, my trouble. Deep pain, deep, deep pressure eating up his insides.

Now, my friends, the Bible is completely clear that this sort of pressure is not reserved only for the kings in the Bible.

It's not reserved only for King David. Actually, all believers, all those who are united to the Lord Jesus today, which is all of us as Christians, should expect to face such pressure in life.

[13:05] Remember the words of King David's greater son, the Lord Jesus himself. If he said to his disciples, If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own. But because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you.

I'm not saying that you will always, every second of your life, face hostility from unbelievers round about you, but you will go through times of hardship in this way. So we must not be surprised, friends, if we as a church or as individuals come under fire from the unbelieving society that surrounds us simply because we love the Lord our God.

It shouldn't surprise us either when we face hostility from those within the professing church today too. Again, because we really love Jesus and take his words seriously.

It's just part of the normal Christian life, isn't it? Remember the book of Acts? What was Paul's message to the young churches who'd sprouted up wherever he'd planted the gospel?

What did he say to these young Christians to encourage them? Literally to put in courage into them? Paul said, through many tribulations, we must enter the kingdom of God.

[14:25] It was true of David. It will also be true for us too. And of course, friends, there will also be times in the Christian life today when we will be deeply conscious of our own failings and folly.

There will be times when we too look back to the days when we were younger, if you're an older Christian, and you look back and you look at some of the things that you did, the stupidity, the arrogance, the sin that you committed when you were younger, you see all that and it reminds you and it fills your heart with horror and you're full of despair.

Maybe that's actually how you're feeling tonight as you come to church. Maybe you're here tonight sitting in church and surrounded by other people and maybe before the service you've managed to plaster on a smile across your face that's fooled everyone.

But actually, deep down in your heart, you are desperately lonely and afflicted because of what you've done against the Lord. And you know it's wrong.

Well, friend, again, that's really common, says Psalm 25. As those who've been brought into union with Christ, our lives now are a war zone.

[15:43] The Christian life is a big battleground where we fight against the foe. And remember, friends, behind any enemy that we face lies the enemy, capital E, Satan himself, who, as James Phillips says, coordinates all the attacks and all the pressures against us to afflict us.

And one thing he especially loves to do is to tempt us to think about sins that we've done in the past, to drag up all of our failures, maybe sins that we've repented of a long time ago, to remind us of that, to make us despair.

Remember, you're in a battle, folks. But remember, there is a place to find help and hope always. Psalm 25 says to us here, if that is you, then look and listen to David.

Follow his example in your distress. Turn to the God of your salvation. And that brings me to our second main point this evening. The petitions made by a suffering servant.

The petitions made by a suffering servant. And I have a wee petition for the sound desk, which is, brothers, would you mind just pop me down a wee bit? I'm ringing a little bit. Is that okay? Thanks, Fraser. Sorry.

[16:59] But the petitions of David. Here we go. Here we go. So, David is in great anguish. He's been hounded by the foe. He's so conscious of his sin. But David doesn't sink back into silent despair.

Neither does he turn to any evil or any earthly thing to help him sort out his trouble. No, David cries unwholehearted trust to the Lord alone. Because he knows that only the Lord can help him.

And so, in verses 1 to 7 and verse 15 to 22, David makes some seriously big petitions, big requests to the Lord. We don't have time to look at every last detail.

You can do that in your own time and I pray that you will in the week ahead. But let's just look at these, three of these petitions under three subheadings. And they all begin with the letter D.

So there we go. Here's the first petition. David says, deliver me. Deliver me, Lord. Verse 2, oh my God, in you I trust.

[18:03] Let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies exult over me. In other words, he's asking the Lord to deliver him from the evil schemes of those who are out to get him.

Those who are out to make David look like a complete fool for trusting in the Lord. David wants the Lord to vindicate him publicly for the Lord to declare that he is a real believer.

Someone who was so right for trusting in the Lord. And see, by way of implication, when David says, don't put me to shame, he is also asking that the Lord will in fact publicly put his enemies to shame.

And he asks for the same thing again in verse 19. Consider how many are my foes and with what violent hatred they hate me. Oh, guard my soul and deliver me.

Let me not be put to shame for I take refuge in you. But just notice, please, that David is very clear on the fact that he's going to have to wait for this delivery.

[19:07] He's going to have to wait for the Lord to do this. Verse 3. Indeed, none who wait for you shall be put to shame. They shall be ashamed who are wantonly treacherous.

So David knows that this deliverance will only come according to the Lord's timing. He will have to wait. In this sense, David is an example of one of the points Willie was talking about from James this morning.

Here is a prayer of a man who's going to patiently endure the time of trial. He's going to patiently endure this pressure. Might even have to do it for the rest of his life. Here's a thought.

But ultimately, he knows that if the Lord is his refuge, then full salvation will be coming his way. And so he cries, Lord, deliver me.

That's the first petition. Here's the second one. Lord, direct me. Direct me. Please look at verse 4. Make me to know your ways, O Lord.

[20:10] Teach me your path. Lead me in your truth and teach me. For you are the God of my salvation. For you I wait all the day long.

So David is asking that the Lord would direct him down the Lord's paths. In other words, David is saying to the Lord, teach me how to live properly. Correct me. I know that I'm prone to wander.

Prone to leave you, the God I love. Please correct me. Teach me how to walk in your good and your loving commandments that are for my own good. Dale Ralph Davis here actually has a different take on these verses.

And he says that when David speaks about the Lord making known his ways to David, it's as though David is not referring to God's commandments, but rather to God's gracious ways in operating.

In other words, verse 4, David is asking the Lord to make known not his precepts, but rather his providence. In other words, David is saying, Lord, make known to me the gracious ways in which you deal with downtrodden people like me.

[21:17] Provide a way for me. Now David could well be asking for that, but I'm more persuaded given what David says in the rest of the psalm about going astray so often that he's humbly confessing that he needs to be corrected.

If you like, in Psalm 23 language, it's as though David's saying, I know that my only hope in getting on in this life is that your rod and your staff, which are used to direct the sheep and to discipline the sheep and to keep them in line, they're David's only hope.

That is what he's saying, lead me in the way that I need to go. I know that alone, Lord, I won't go the way I should. I'm morally lost without you, prone to folly, prone to falling.

So Lord, direct me. And thirdly, the third petition David says here in this section is, Lord, don't remember my sin, remember mercy.

Don't remember my sin, remember mercy. That is really what David is saying in verses 6 to 7. In verses 6 to 7, David uses the verb remember three times in quick succession.

[22:32] Twice positively, the book end the section, and then he uses the word remember negatively in between. Dare I say, it's structured like a sandwich. Hello?

Anyone? Let's just read verses 6 to 7, please. Let's read this together. Listen to this. Remember your mercy, O Lord, your steadfast love, for they have been from of old.

Remember not the sins of my youth, my transgressions. According to your steadfast love, Lord, remember me for the sake of your goodness, O Lord.

And actually, friends, our English translation doesn't do verse 6 justice. Verse 6, literally translated, says, Lord, remember your compassions, plural. O Lord, remember your steadfast love, the idea of God's special covenant love for his people being multiplied again and again and again and again and again.

Remember that great love. In other words, David is calling on the Lord to be what the Lord has always been for his people. the God who has eternal compassion and steadfast love for his wayward sheep.

[23:51] For it is as one commentator says, compassion and grace are the Lord's always style of operating. Compassion and grace are the Lord's always style of operating.

Isn't that remarkable? the holy and true God. He loves for us to call on him to forget our sins and he does.

More on that in a minute. But David doesn't fall into the trap that we sometimes fall into when we struggle with inner guilt. Sometimes when we've messed up big time before the Lord, we think to ourselves, I've gone far too far this time.

This is so terrible, I can't possibly turn to the Lord. I need to try and sort out this on my own first of all before I ask for forgiveness. Maybe I need to go and be a better Christian before I can turn to the Lord.

Psalm 25 says, no, rubbish. Don't do that. That's not the way of faith. That's the way of self-righteousness. If you've fallen into sin, you've messed up big time, do not stop.

[25:01] Sorry, don't carry on turning away from the Lord, but stop and turn back to him and ask him to remember his compassions, for they are great. There's a wideness in God's mercy.

And ask him to deal with you according to the love that he has had for us since before he laid the foundations of the earth. Ask him to remember us according to the love which sent his son into this world to pay the price for our sin.

My friends, if you feel weighed down by the guilt of your sin, Psalm 25 says, take it to the Lord in prayer. And if you feel hopeless at staying on the Lord's paths, Psalm 25 says, take it to the Lord in prayer.

And the next time you find yourself hammered by the enemies of the gospel, Psalm 25 says, take it to the Lord in prayer. For these three petitions, they're big petitions, but they're not big enough for our God.

And they are three petitions that any suffering servant can pray with great confidence because we trust in a God who loves to answer yes to such petitions as these.

[26 : 19] And that brings us to our final main point this evening. We've seen the pressure felt by a suffering servant, we've seen the petitions made by a suffering servant, and lastly, we see the provisions made by a loving Lord.

The provisions made by a loving Lord. And that is really what the heart of this prayer is all focused on, in verse 8 to 14. Now at first reading, you might have been tempted to think that this is just a random selection of glorious, great truths about our God that are not really connected to what goes before, and what goes after them.

But my friends, they're not random at all. In verses 8 to 14, David is still praying, and yes, he's declaring that the Lord is able and willing to do the things that he has just asked him to do.

In other words, David is praising the Lord because he has revealed himself to be a God who answers yes when his people come to him like David with the same requests that David has made.

And really as David is praying this, he's not only praying to the Lord the things that the Lord loves to hear from us. The Lord loved it when we repeat things from his words about his character and his goodness.

[27 : 39] David is doing that, but at the same time, David is also helping himself in his own agonized heart. It's a beautiful thing about prayer, isn't it? It's always us speaking to the Lord, but at the same time, we are speaking to our own hearts, aren't we not?

That's how John Calvin reads this section. He says that in verses 8 to 14, David is praying and meditating upon these truths in order to stir himself up and increase his confidence in the Lord his God.

Let's look at what David prays about this loving Lord. And I have two sub points this time, two subheadings. Okay, everyone with me? You all with me? Here's the first sub point.

Here we have this sub point. And David says to the Lord, Lord, you are able and willing to direct and deliver your people.

You are able and willing to direct and deliver your people. Please look at verse 8 and 9. David says, Good and upright is the Lord. Therefore, he instructs sinners in the way.

[28 : 46] He leads the humble in what is right and teaches the humble his way. all the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.

So remember, in verse 4, David asked the Lord to direct him, teach me how to live properly in response to your grace, to joyfully walk in closer obedience to you, the Lord of my salvation.

In verse 8 and 9, David declares with great joy and confidence that the Lord is a God who loves to do just that. The Lord is so gracious and kind.

He teaches sinners in the way, people who don't deserve it, people like you and I, that don't deserve anything from the Lord but punishment. Actually, what we get is love and loving guidance morally being shown how to live.

No one should ever claim that they are too alienated from the Lord, beyond help and hope, for this Lord will show his people in Christ the way of recovery.

[29 : 53] Notice verse 9, the Lord leads and teaches the humble. You see that? The word there in Hebrew refers to the Lord's own battered and beaten down people.

Alec Motier translates it as the downtrodden. It's referring to those who, like David, have been clobbered and detested by the world.

Those who look like they have been abandoned by the Lord in this age. They are, in fact, says David, the objects of the Lord's directing care.

Despite how things appear, that is the case. The Lord is the one who loves to lead such people out of trouble. the second thing David says about the Lord is that he forgives and befriends his people.

So this is the second thing the Lord loves to do, the second provision, second sub point here. The Lord loves to forgive and befriend his people. Please look at verse 12 and 13.

[30 : 58] David said, Who is the man who fears the Lord? Him he will instruct in the way that he should choose. His soul shall abide in well-being and his offspring shall inherit the land.

Those who fear the Lord will be forgiven by the Lord. Now David doesn't say that explicitly in these verses, but it is surely implied. When those who fear the Lord pray what David prays in verses 6 to 7 and verse 11, when they ask for forgiveness, saying, Lord, please don't remember my sin.

Remember your compassion. Deal with me according to your steadfast love. Well, verse 12 and 13 clearly implies that the Lord will say yes.

And the Lord doesn't stop at just forgiveness. He gives them an even greater blessing. In verse 13, he guards and protects his people and gives them security.

Verse 13, the little phrase there saying that believers will inherit the land, that is really used in the New Testament as shorthand for eternal life. But the Lord doesn't stop there either.

[32 : 15] Not only does he forgive his people, not only does he give his people eternal life, he gives them something far greater still. And we'll think about that in a second when we come to verse 14.

But before then, I just want to ask, what does it mean to fear the Lord that David speaks about there? What does it mean to fear the Lord in verse 12?

I was once listening to someone give a Bible talk at a youth event, a Christian youth event. I forget the passage, I think it might have been the book of Proverbs, Proverbs chapter 1.

And the bloke up the front was saying a lot of good stuff, it was good talk, but he tried to unpack what the Bible means by fear of the Lord. And he said something like this, this is a paraphrase.

He said, of course, fear here doesn't mean what we really mean by fear. It certainly doesn't mean that we should be afraid of the Lord. Actually, it's just another way of talking about having faith in the Lord.

[33 : 16] Friends, that is not right. One commentator says, when people say such things about the fear of the Lord, then they are emasculating the idea as if there is such a thing as fear without fear.

There's no such thing as fear without fear. Friends, to fear the Lord really does mean to fear him. True, it's not the equivalent to utter terror, but there are plenty of other texts throughout the Bible that ought to keep us from draining all of the knee knocking out of the term.

For example, Psalm 119 says, my flesh trembles for fear of you, and I'm afraid of your judgments. If the fear of the Lord connotes trust, if it means something to do with an aspect of trust in the Lord, then we must always remember that it is a trembling trust, says Ralph Davis.

Well, anyway, back to the text. Verses 12 and 13 imply that those who fear the Lord will receive forgiveness and eternal security from the Lord, but then in verse 14, David adds an even more beautiful detail.

Verse 14, the friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. friendship, friendship with the God of the universe.

[34 : 49] The Hebrew word translated as friendship can also mean closeness. It's a word that's sometimes used of a council of trusted friends where secrets are divulged and trusted information is passed on to people.

It's a word that carries the idea of intimacy, closeness. In other words, David is saying that those who fear the Lord, they will enjoy the most intimate communion with the Lord, their God.

And that means those who fear the Lord are really doing what they're created to do, which is to know God, to enjoy him, to glorify him forever. That's what friendship of the Lord is.

It's not just a New Testament idea. It's always been a beautiful blessing and gift that the Lord loves to bestow upon his suffering servants. So those are the provisions of a loving Lord.

He directs and delivers his people. He forgives and befriends his people. And he delights to give these things to us. And so we can have great confidence when we come before the throne of grace and prayer to ask for these same things.

[36 : 01] Friends, these verses stir us up. move within us a trembling trust, but also a great confidence at the same time.

And if you lack certainty that the Lord will give us these things, then maybe, it might not be, but maybe, just maybe, the answer is found in our prayers. Maybe our prayers have been impoverished with truths about the Lord our God, with these truths about the Lord our God.

And maybe we need to start using scripture to shape the way we pray more often. Well, as we close, let me just sum up all of this.

Psalm 25 wants us to learn from David's experience and his prayer. Don't be surprised if you find yourself immersed in the same sort of pressure he was in.

Please do not believe some of the drivel that is pushed by those in the professing church today, that if you trust in Jesus, your life will be peachy. Your life will be full of days without trouble.

[37 : 14] Rubbish, says the Bible. If you belong to the Lord, then you're very likely to go through tough times. And my friend, when you're in the thick of such times, be very quick, not to panic, not to turn this way or that way, but to turn to the Lord, your God who loves you.

And to make these same big petitions that David did, Lord, deliver me, Lord, direct me, don't remember my sin, remember mercy. Remember your compassions, your everlasting steadfast love.

And don't stop praying them after you've made your big petitions, pray on throughout all your days. Praise the Lord for the fact that he is also our loving Lord who delights to answer yes to such things.

Thrill your souls. He loves to deliver us, he loves to direct us, he loves to forgive and befriend us. Just look at his son, the one that David points forward to.

So turn to him with trembling trust and with great confidence. Let's do that now, let's bow our heads and let's pray to the Lord our God. Let's pray.

[38 : 29] to you, O Lord, I lift up my soul.

O my God, in you I trust. Let me not be put to shame. Let not my enemies exalt over me. Heavenly Father, we praise you that you are a gracious and merciful God.

you are the God who delights to deliver us from our enemies. You are the God who delights to teach us and lead us down your paths of righteousness.

and you are the God who will not remember our sin. And Father, we praise you that we, from this point in history, can look back and see where our sin was fully paid for at the cross of Calvary.

And the Lord Jesus laid down his own life, fueled by that same steadfast love and compassion that David appealed to all those years before.

[39 : 40] We praise you for our Saviour. Remember us in him, according to your steadfast love, which is from everlasting to everlasting.

We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.