

God's Plan in the Epistles

God's Plan in Scripture

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I'm Trey Garner. I'm the Pastor of our Children's Ministries here at Faith and it's a special privilege for me to be able to study God's Word with you this morning. I want to introduce you to my son, Noah. Noah is five years old. He loves dinosaurs and my wife, Deb, and I, we just can't believe that he is five already. It wasn't too long ago that Noah actually looked like this. That is a picture of him when he was just seven days old.

I can remember what things were like when Noah was first born. I remember how excited that we were. I also remember feeling like we had absolutely no idea what we had gotten ourselves into. While we were still in the hospital, I was so thankful to be in a place where people with expertise could help us. But you know, just a couple of days after he was born, Deb and I received the startling news that we would actually have to leave the hospital and I remember thinking, "What if we just refused to go?" But then I thought, "Well, that's probably gonna add to the hospital bill," and I didn't like that. I thought, "What if we just refused to pay?" Then I realized the police would get involved and so that didn't seem like a good option. So, when it was time, we left. The silver lining was that my Mom would be staying with us for a while and she had raised four kids so, surely, we would be okay while she was with us. The problem was that the next week my Mom left and as I was dropping her off at the airport, I thought, "This is wrong." I mean, how could Deb and I be expected to care for this child. He was messy, he cried a lot, he ate at weird times, he spoke like no English.

Anyway, Deb and I had to face this new reality and I thought, "How are Deb and Noah and I ever going to be able to navigate this new life together?" By the grace of God, Noah has made it to age five so we've at least done a couple of things right but it strikes me that that question, how will we navigate this new life together, that's the very question that Jesus' followers had to wrestle with in the early days of the church. With that in mind, let me invite you to open up your Bibles to the Book of Colossians 1. That's found on page 156 of the back section of the Bible under the chair in front of you.

This morning we're continuing our summer long survey of the Bible in a series that we've titled "God's Plan in Scripture." So far in this series we've walked through the 39 books of the Old Testament. A couple of weeks ago, Pastor Green led us through a discussion of the Gospels where we saw the unique ways in which each of the Gospel writers presents the awesome character of Christ. Last week, Pastor Viars walked us

through the months and years following Christ's resurrection as believers began to carry out this new mission that they had in the Book of Acts. This morning, we're launching into the next section of Scripture as we examine God's Plan in the Epistles.

Perhaps we should begin by explaining what an epistle is. That's a word that we don't typically use nowadays but it's a well-known fact that the epistles were actually the wives of the Apostles. That is a joke that is as old as the hills and Pastor Viars was convinced that we needed to share that joke with a new generation. Now, after having told it, I am not so convinced of that. The word "epistle" actually refers to a letter and in the New Testament we find 21 different letters written by at least five different authors to multiple recipients. And these books fall into two major categories. The first category is known as the Pauline Epistles. Now, I'm weird, I don't know why, but it helps me to think of this category of epistles by using a Jersey dialect, the Pauline Epistles, and it's important to note that they were not written by a girl by Pauline.

They were written by the Apostle Paul and the Pauline Epistles were named for the audience to whom Paul was writing. Nine of these books were written to churches: the Book of Romans was written to the church at Rome; 1 and 2 Corinthians were written to the church at Corinth; Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, they were written to the churches in the cities or regions for which they were named. The Pauline Epistles also include the books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus and Philemon. These books were written to individuals. Titus and Timothy, they were both pastors that Paul had discipled and that's why you'll sometimes hear these books referred to as the Pastoral Epistles. Then, there's another subset of Paul's writings that were penned while he was imprisoned and sometimes you'll hear the books of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon called the Prison Epistles.

Aside from Paul's writings, there are eight other letters in the New Testament and these books are known as the General Epistles. They include the books of Hebrews, James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2 and 3 John and Jude. With the exception of Hebrews, which was written to a Jewish audience, these books are named for their author. And they're called the General Epistles because for the most part, their intended audience is the Christian public in general rather than individual persons or congregations.

Why were these epistles written? Well, think about some of the issues that would have been facing the early church. What was their worship supposed to look like? They knew that Christ had died for their sins but were they still supposed to carry out the sacrifices of their Old Testament ancestors? What about the church and its expansion? I mean, not only the Jews but Gentiles began to place their faith in Christ. How were the Jews and Gentiles supposed to relate to one another? What about the mission that Jesus had given to them? How were they supposed to carry that out? In other words, how do we navigate this new life together? That's the question that believers in the early church and believers in this church need to be able to answer. And to help believers sort through these issues, God provided the Apostles, men who were inspired by God to provide guidance to the early church and to all of the successive generations of Christians that would follow and he gave this guidance through the Epistles.

That's why we find this statement in the Book of 1 Timothy which says, "I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth." With that understanding, let's look at our text. Let's look at Colossians 1, we'll begin in verse 1.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, To the saints and faithful brethren in Christ who are at Colossae: Grace to you and peace from God our Father. We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints." The Apostle Paul, he hadn't been personally involved in planting the Colossian church but he had learned of their faith.

Verse 5, "Because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; just as you learned it from Epaphras," Epaphras was the man that God had used to launch the Colossian church. "Just as you learned it from Epaphras our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf, and he also informed us of your love in the Spirit." Now, lock on to this next set of verses. This has all been ramping up to these next verses. They are very important for our discussion this morning.

"For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Remember our question: How will we navigate this new life together? How are we as followers of Jesus Christ supposed to carry out this Christian life? What is that supposed to look like? In response, the Apostle Paul provides a very simple formula. Do you see it there in the text? Look in verse 9 again, "we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding." That's the first part of Paul's formula. He says, "be filled with the knowledge of God's will."

What's the second part? Paul goes on, "so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God." Paul says that once you know the will of God, you then are supposed to use that knowledge to do the will of God, to "walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, to bear fruit in every good work." That's the formula for the

Christian experience. And if you want a simple way to remember it, you could say it like this: know then do. Know then do. And we're supposed to understand and then act. We're supposed to learn and then live out. The Apostle Paul says, "If you want to successfully navigate the Christian life you have to invest yourself in the study of God's Word. You then begin to labor, to exert yourself, to perspire, to engage in the work of acting on God's truth." You say, "Pastor Trey, that sounds like a lot of work. That sounds hard. Why would I do that?" Well, it's because of what we just read in the text. He has "has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." Then, you're like, "Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, right. I do that because of what Christ has done for me."

It's important to remember the Apostle Paul's audience. He is writing to those who have already placed their faith in Christ. He's not saying that this is how a person becomes a Christian. We'll talk about how that happens. He's saying that this is what the Christian life ought to look like after you've made the decision to follow Christ. Know and then do. Throughout the epistles, we see this know then do dynamic in place where an Apostle provides instruction in the doctrines of the Christian faith and then tells his readers how he ought to practically apply and respond to those truths.

The epistles contain so much deep theological truth that are so important for believers in the church to understand and to act on but because your employers are planning to see you at some point during the week, we're not going to be able to cover all of them. We're only going to hit the biggies this morning. We could call this a flyover but what this really is, it's a low earth orbit over the epistles. So, for the remainder of our time, we're going to consider five important subjects discussed in the epistles that are going to help us to know and do the will of God.

The first subject is that of redemption. Typically a pastor might save this subject for the very end of his message but because we're studying a series of books intended to help those that have already been saved, that have already been redeemed to understand how they're supposed to live out the Christian life, we need to start with the subject of redemption. Redemption is the foundation upon which the entire Christian life is built. You might ask, "Well, if these books were written to people who previously trusted Christ, wouldn't they already understand redemption?" I think that's a fair question but if you've been a believer for any period of time, then you know rare is the individual who fully understands his salvation at the point he chooses to follow Christ.

After that decision, there is so much that a Christian needs to know about the work that God has performed in his life and in the epistles we find the most thorough explanation of salvation anywhere in the Bible. For one, we learn about our spiritual condition. The Book of Ephesians says that you were dead in your trespasses and sins; we were excluded from the life of God. The sad reality is that each of us is spiritually dead, separated from a holy God by our sin without any ability to reconcile ourselves to him. And if something was going to be done about our spiritual condition, God would have to do that for us. And so, the epistles tell us about our Savior's work; they tell us that Christ died for sins

according to the Scriptures, that he was buried and that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures. They tell us the purpose for his sacrifice, that Christ also died once for all, the just for the unjust so that he might bring us to God.

And they tell us what our response to Christ's work ought to be. You see, in order to properly respond to Christ's work, we need to understand that salvation cannot be earned. Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that "it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith and that not of yourselves, it's the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast." It doesn't matter how good we are, or how hard we try, we can't do anything to blot out even one of our sins. Anyone who wishes to be reconciled with God can't rely on his own spiritual merit because as sinners we have no spiritual merit. Instead, we have to cry out to God.

We have to place our faith in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ and for anyone who does that, the epistles reveal a marvelous promise. They tell us about the results of our faith. 1. We're rescued from hell. In Colossians, we already saw that he rescued us from the domain of darkness. The Book of Romans tells us that "if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved." Not only are we saved from the penalty of our sin, from an eternity separated from God, but we also granted the precious gift of eternal life. 1 John 5:13 says, "These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life." What glorious things we have to look forward to as joint heirs and fellow partakers of the marvelous promises of God.

What about this life? What difference does redemption make in the present? The epistles tell us that because of our faith, we are made spiritually alive. The Book of Ephesians reveals that at the point of salvation, believers in Christ are given new spiritual life. Even when we were dead in our transgressions God made us alive together with Christ. One of the major goals of the epistle writers was to help their readers understand what this new life in Christ was all about. These were mysteries that believers in the early church needed to understand. The same can be said of us.

Remember our formula? Know then do. Knowing isn't enough. We have to act on what we know. So, how do you act on what the Scriptures have to say about this subject of redemption? I would say that if you're here this morning and there's never been a definite point in your life where you've acknowledged that you're a sinner and that your sin has separated you from God, if you've never recognized that Christ died on the cross for your sins and gloriously rose from the dead proving that he conquered your sin, that there's never been a point when you've embraced Christ as your only hope of heaven, I want to encourage you to get that handled right away. Put the message of the epistles on this subject of redemption make an eternal difference in your life. If you've got questions about that, I understand that. There's a lot that can be studied and said about this. If you have questions, get in touch with us this week. We would love nothing more than to help you make sure that you are on your way to heaven.

So, once a person is redeemed we then need to begin developing our relationship with the one who redeemed us and that's why the epistles spend a lot of time helping us to understand our Savior. As you think about the grand storyline of the Scriptures, the entire Old Testament was spent in anticipation of the Messiah and the Old Testament gives us some clues about what the Messiah would be like, but that picture is incomplete. In the New Testament, Jesus has come. Not only has he come but by the time of the epistles, he has completed his work. He has put flesh and blood on our understanding of God. Those believers who never had the chance to spend time with Jesus personally, they needed those who did have that opportunity to reveal what Jesus is like.

So, the epistles reveal the character of Christ. In these books we learn that Christ is holy. He is righteous. He is powerful. He is wise. He is merciful. He is true. He is just and on and on and on. If you read on in the text from Colossians, we see an incredible description of our Savior. It says that "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities - all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." How much we learn about our Savior in those three short verses. Imagine how much more we would learn if we were to just read on.

You say, "Why is it so important for me to understand these things about Jesus?" Well, it's because of what we read in 2 Timothy. Paul says, "I know whom I have believed in and am convinced that he is able to guard what I have entrusted to him unto that day." Knowing Christ gives us confidence. You see, if we know our God, if we know his character, if we trust in him then regardless of whatever storms may come into our life, we don't have to be shaken because we know the one who is in command of the storm.

The epistles are designed to help us understand the character of our Savior. In addition, the epistles also reveal the incredible news of our union with Christ. Romans 6 explains that "we have become united with Him in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection, knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin." And as a result of our mysterious union with Christ, Paul says, "even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus and having been freed from sin you became slaves of righteousness."

Remember the formula? Know then do. As a result of our union with Christ, we are called to throw off the shackles of our sinful habits and instead to become slaves of righteousness. Is that how you think about yourself? As a slave of righteousness? If I asked the other people in your life who are closest to you, is that what they would say about you? Is that what the Lord would say about you? That you're a slave of righteousness? Some of you may be able to honestly say that by the grace of God, "Hey, I'm not perfect but I really do work hard every day striving to glorify God with my daily choices." And if that's the case, I hope that you would praise God for his grace in your life. Others of us would probably have to admit that we've got a lot of room to grow in regard to righteousness.

How does that growth take place? Well, it begins by developing your relationship with God. Knowing Christ should be the consuming passion of our lives. When we place Christ first in our lives, we understand how to prioritize everything else. Paul said it this way, “I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and I count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ and may be found in him; not having a righteousness of my own derived from the law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings.”

Righteousness grows in the soil of a vibrant relationship with Christ. The more we love Jesus, the more we will hunger and thirst for righteousness. The more we love Jesus, the more abhorrent the idea of sinning against him becomes. You say, “Great. Pastor Trey, I’m supposed to love Jesus more. I knew that when I walked in the door. How do I do that?” Well, it happens as it would in any relationship: by spending time with him, by spending time in his Word, by spending time in prayer. Many of us do far too little of that.

So, I’d encourage you if this is an area of struggle in our life, just start simply. Identify one thing and it can be a small thing, one thing on which you’re spending time right now that you know could be better spent in developing your relationship with Christ. And I think most of us could find one thing to replace with Bible Study and prayer. And remember, God is honored even by the small steps that we take.

In addition to teaching us about redemption, in addition to teaching us about our Savior, the epistles they also address the important subject of our sanctification. The Bible uses the term sanctification in a couple of different senses. What I’m referring to here is what we call progressive sanctification. That’s a process by which people become more and more like Jesus. That’s the goal of our sanctification. If you’ve been around our church for any period of time, then it’s likely that you’ve heard our talk about Romans 8:28-29. That passage is just one of the staples of our teaching ministry. And I would say that if you really, really want to do yourself a favor, learn to process life through the grid of Romans 8:28-29. It will absolutely transform the way you respond to circumstances.

Here’s what it says, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son.” So what does that mean? The bottom line is that God has a good purpose for everything that comes into the life of his children and that purpose is to help us become more like his Son. God’s goal for our lives is not to make us wealthy, it’s not even to make us healthy, it’s to make us more like Jesus.

With the kids in our Children’s Ministries I say it like this, “God wants us to become like Christ.” I talk to them about that nearly every week. I tell them that that is something they need to know so well I ought to be able to wake them up from a dead sleep at four in the

morning and ask them, “What is God’s goal for your life?” And after they have called the cops on me for breaking and entering into their home, they should be able to say, “God wants us to become like Christ.” That’s God’s goal for us and everything that enters our lives, good, bad or otherwise, is intended for that purpose.

Let’s assume that you know what God’s goal for your life is and you’re ready to do something about it. Know then do. Let’s talk about the process of our sanctification. In the Book of Ephesians, we read this, “that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.” Paul very helpfully outlines a three step process for biblical change and he says that if we’re going to become more like Christ: 1. we need to put off our old self; we have to stop doing the things that displease God; we have to renew our minds; we have to fill our minds with biblical truth so that we will know how to respond to the various temptations that enter our life, especially those temptations that challenge us most.

Then, we have to put on the new self: replace the stuff that you shouldn’t be doing with habits that will help you to please the Lord. You say, “Man, Pastor Trey, making changes sounds really hard. I don’t know if I can do this on my own.” And you’re right. It is and you can’t but the great news is, you don’t have to. That’s because God has provided you with the Spirit. One of the biggest differences for followers of God from the Old Testament to the New Testament is the ministry of the Holy Spirit. It is a game changer. In the Old Testament, the Spirit worked generally to convict men of sin. He also empowered select individuals for specific acts of service but in the New Testament, his work among God’s people is much more pervasive and much more intimate.

The epistles reveal that the Holy Spirit indwells us. 1 Corinthians 3:16 says, “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?” At the moment that a person chooses to place their faith in Christ, a number of unseen things happen that radically alter the life of that individual. One of the things that happens is that the Holy Spirit comes to take residence inside that person. That is huge. You may remember from the Old Testament that when the Israelites constructed the Tabernacle and later on the Temple, that the glory of the Lord filled that place. God came to dwell among his people and when that happened that place became the worship center of God’s people.

In the Book of Ezekiel, we read about the fall of Jerusalem and the devastating news that the glory of God departed from, left the Temple. For the Old Testament believers, the localized presence of God was a big deal. It was a big deal then and it’s a big deal now. If you have chosen to follow Christ as Lord, then you have the Holy Spirit of God dwelling inside of you. His abiding presence is with you at all times and because of that, you have been transformed from a normal person like anybody else walking around the planet to a walking, talking mobile worship center of the living God. Praise God for his help in our lives. The Holy Spirit is working personally in your life to convict you of sin and to guide

you in the paths of righteousness to help you bring glory to God. Would you agree that's a big deal? It's a huge deal.

So, the Spirit indwells us. That's one of the things that we need to know about the Spirit. What do we do with that knowledge? If we are indwelt by the Spirit, Paul says that we are to "walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh." We are to cooperate with the Spirit by doing what we said earlier: by putting off sinful habits, putting on those habits that will help us become like Jesus. God has given us his Spirit to help in a manner worthy of the Lord.

That's not all because he also made us part of the church. Have you ever heard somebody say, "I believe in God. I just really don't believe in church." Have you ever heard somebody say that? Listen, I have to tell that that is folly and it is patently unbiblical. Last week, Pastor Viars discussed Acts 2 where those who believed in Christ were baptized and then added to the church. The church is to be an integral part of the life of every believer. That's why we read in Hebrews, "Let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together as is the habit of some." You see, it was going on even in New Testament times. "But encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near." God does not intend the Christian life to be lived out in isolation. It is to be lived out in community in the context of loving relationships where each of us would be encouraged and challenged to grow. And because of that, we come to worship together, to study together, to dream together, to pray together, to mourn together, to celebrate together. This is family life. This is the household of God.

And we live this Christian life together because we are called to it and because of our mission. Jesus said to his disciples that he would "build his church and the gates of hell would not prevail against it." Jesus said to his disciples that he would use them in this process of carrying out his mission. That's one of the reasons why Pastor Viars used the word "unfinished" to describe the ministry that we see in the Book of Acts because Christ is not finished building his church. And he wants each of us to be a part of that building process. Why? Because we can get more accomplished together than we can separately.

So what is our mission? Around Faith we say it like this: that the mission of Faith Church is to glorify God by winning people to Jesus Christ and equipping them to be more faithful disciples. That's what we're all about. It sounds a whole lot like what Jesus told his disciples when he said, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you and lo I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

How do we carry out this mission? Know then do, right? Well, we've got a lot of tremendous opportunities coming up this fall to reach and equip people for Christ. We talk a lot about fall readiness at this time of year. Why? Because the start of the school year, which is just a couple of weeks away now, the start of the school year is like New Year's around the community. That's when many families start thinking about making a fresh start, about doing things the right way and that includes getting things right with

God. And so we talk about fall readiness so that we will be prepared. Now, I realize you can be tempted to think that getting ready for the fall is something that the pastors or the church staff does around a church from an administrative or even an advertising perspective. Oh, no, no, no, no, no. Fall readiness is a heart attitude. It's about looking for opportunities to plant seeds in the soil that God has already working up in people's hearts. It's about making a point to talk to that co-worker or that neighbor and invite them to church. It's about arriving ten minutes early. I realize that's a challenge for our 8:00 folks.

Some of you are getting these emails that I send out on a regular basis and I call you 7:50 worshipper. I do that with the purpose of helping us remember we need to get here early so that we're ready to build relationships with one another because who knows, God may, he just may, want to hold his promise. That he may just want to use you in redemptive way in someone else's life but you can't do that if you're not here to be used by him. So I want to encourage you. Those of you who are coming early, way to go, keep it up. Those of you who are not coming early, set that alarm clock ten minutes earlier on Saturday night if that's what's necessary so that we can come here ready to be used by God to build relationships with those who are visiting as well as those that we may not know who are just kind of on the fringe, who are just beginning to make connections here. We are all on the fall readiness team and we're going to say much more about that in the weeks ahead and a lot of you say, "Oh, goody-goody." You'll get to hear that.

One of the final ways that we carry out our mission is through our service. Paul says that we are saved "by grace through faith for good works which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them." Two chapters later, he tells us that we have been "equipped for the work of service to the building up of the body." God intends every follower of Christ to be engaged in regular service for the strengthening of the local church. I know that many of you are already engaged in faithful, regular, sacrificial service and I want to say on behalf of our pastors, "Thank you. Thank you for the ways that you are allowing God to use you." I would also say that I know many of you are not engaged in regular faithful service. And you are either undeployed or you are under-deployed and if that's the case with you, can I lovingly encourage you to get with it? You may be working at knowing things right now about God, now you need to start doing things for God. You say, "Well, how do I do that?" Contact us this week, we will help you take steps of growth in that area.

Aren't you thankful that God has given us instruction to help us understand how to live out this Christian life? Be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please him in all respects bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Let's go before him in prayer.

Heavenly Father, thank you so much for the teaching of the epistles. Thank you, Lord, that so much of the instruction in these books is so plain and so practical. Thank you for helping us to understand not only your character but also how to live in a way that would

respond well to your character, how to live in a way that would help us to find fulfillment according to our design as those who have not only been created but recreated by Christ. Thank you so much, Lord, for your blessing and your help. We praise you in Christ's name. Amen.