

How To Pray For A Bunch of Christians

Colossians: Christ Above All

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Our passage this evening comes from Colossians 1:9-14, if you'd care to turn there in your Bible. Colossians 1:9-14. Let us hear the apostle's word.

9 For this reason we also, from the day we heard it, do not cease praying for you, and asking that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will with all Spirit-given wisdom and insight; 10 to walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way, being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; 11 being strengthened with all power in line with his glorious might, for all endurance and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who qualified us for a share of the inheritance of the saints in light. 13 He rescued us out of the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

It was there in a Peanuts cartoon clip, Charlie Brown was writing to his pen pal and he said, "Dear Pencil Pal, It has been a long time since I last wrote to you. I would have written before but I forgot all about you." Then there's a blank frame while he reads that and then he says, "Somehow that doesn't sound right." Well, that was not the apostle's way because from the day we heard of it, of what? Well, verse 4 or so, "of your faith in Christ Jesus and of your love for all the saints," from the day we heard of it, "we haven't ceased praying for you and making petition for you." So it was not the apostle's way to forget fellow believers, that's what Ligon Duncan mentioned, by the way, at our Spiritual Life Conference back in March. That hearing even of people's response to the Gospel ought to immediately be a prod to be praying for them and that's what you see of the Apostle Paul here, and surely Paul's prayer here can help us to know how to pray for and what to ask for for believers who are new believers or even established ones. And we sense, don't we, that really prayers for the saints aren't to major on gallbladder surgeries and wisdom teeth extractions, that somehow they ought to deal with something more basic and more fundamental than those matters. Not that those don't matter, I trust you get the balance I'm trying to go for here, but there is something deeper than those kinds of things that we're concerned when we pray for, well, a bunch of Christians.

So here in Paul's prayer, we can see what he thinks is most important to ask for and his prayer may serve us as a model as we pray for other believers. So let's just pick apart the prayer. First, I want you to notice the underlying assumption of this prayer. So look at, say, verses 9 through about verse 11 and 12, kind of back off and look at the whole text here. The underlying assumption of this prayer. Notice the language used throughout the text. Notice that he says, "that you may be filled," verse 9. And then with the knowledge of his will, "with all Spirit-given wisdom and insight." Notice how you have the "all's" and the "every's" here, "with all Spirit-given wisdom and insight; to walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way; being fruitful in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power in line with his glorious might for all endurance and longsuffering." You have about five or six "all's" or "every's" in there plus you have the key word, key verb, "filled," and so on.

Now, what's this saying to us? Well, specially that "you might be filled with the knowledge of his will with all Spirit-given wisdom and insight," and verse 11, "being strengthened with all power for all endurance," and so on. This is telling us, isn't it, that Paul assumes that the God of heaven provides overwhelming sufficiency for the needs of his people. That's what's going on under this prayer. This is the assumption on which he bases his prayer. God does not bring you to Jesus just to dump you on your own resources. That's what he is assuming. He has riches and glory in Christ Jesus, Philippians 4:19, "for the needs of his people on earth." Now, that's assumed in the prayer.

Let me flag another text for you just to show that this just isn't Paul. In 2 Peter 1:3, you have the Apostle Peter saying perhaps a little bit more explicitly but it's the same sort of thing. 2 Peter 1:3, "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who has called us by his own glory and excellence." Then, "his divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." Just in case we didn't get it, the "all things" Peter puts it first in the clause; it's emphatic so if Peter had a computer, "all things" would be in bold print. "His divine power has given us **all things** that pertain to life and godliness." That's what he's saying there. There is this massive provision of Jesus for the living of the Christian life. That's why you can make it and we just don't usually think in those terms perhaps.

Now, if Dr. Ferguson were still here, I might not tell this but he's not and Dr. Donald Gray Barnhouse used to tell this story of a Scotsman who arrived down in Liverpool, England where he was going to embark on a journey to America and he fingered the few shillings that he had in his pocket that made up all his earthly capital and decided that he would economize on the cost of food on the trip so he would have more money in his hand when he reached New York. So he went to a small store and laid in a supply of cheese and crackers to take along with him and he did that, but as the voyage progressed, the sea air made him very hungry and the sea air made his crackers damp and his cheese hard. So he was almost desperate with hunger and to cap it off, he caught the fragrant whiff of some food that a steward was carrying to someone's cabin and he determined that he would have at least one good square meal before he reached New York. So he waited where he was until the steward came back and he inquired of him just how much

it would cost for him to go to the dining room and have a dinner. The steward asked him to show him his ticket and he did and the steward said, "Well, your meals are included in the price of your ticket." The provision had already been made. There was an adequacy there and he wasn't aware of it at all.

Now, that's the way we can sometimes be in our view of the Christian life but Paul doesn't see it that way. That's why he says, "You can be filled with the knowledge of his will with all Spirit-given wisdom and insight, strengthened with all might." Christ has made adequate provision. He agrees with Peter, "His divine power is granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." You see what that does, that cuts out this attitude that says, "Oh, but I can't maintain a Christ-like life. I'm just not able. There are too many pressures and there are too many temptations. If you just realize what it is that I face in my particular circumstances, you would understand that I just can't do it. If you knew what I have to face, where I work. If you knew what life in a modern university was like and the peer pressure that you face there. Or if you had to live with my spouse," etc. etc. No, you must not say that and Jesus will not allow you to appeal to victimhood. No, no, you must not say, "I cannot live a godly life in that situation. Or it's impossible for me to change." "His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness." That's how it's possible and Paul agrees with Peter for he assumes that in his prayer. He assumes that the God of heaven provides an overwhelming sufficiency for the needs of his people.

Secondly, let's notice the main petition of this prayer. The main petition of this prayer and it's in verse 9 and the first part of verse 10, the last part of verse 9 really and the first part of verse 10. What's his petition? Well, he asks, "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will with all Spirit-given wisdom and insight to walk worthy of the Lord," when he says "the Lord," he means the Lord Jesus there, "to walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way." Now, that's the main petition. There's only really one petition in this prayer. Grammatically, that's the main petition, what follows are sort of the results that flow from this, assuming God will answer this prayer.

But I want you to look at this petition. Here there is a certain relief. Well, you notice he says, "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will." I can't pull up the background from Greek and Roman paganism so much, I'm more familiar with Ancient Near Eastern paganism from what you might call the Old Testament period or background, and what a relief, in a way, this is. I think maybe I've alluded to it before but in ancient paganism in Mesopotamia or somewhere, we have prayers and so on, in which the very problem that the worshiper faces is that he has no clue what the god wants. He has no clue what his pagan deity desires. For instance, there's an Acadian prayer and it goes something like this, a part of it, "I wish I knew that these things would be pleasing to one's god. What is good to one's self may be an offense to one's god. What in one's own heart seems despicable may be proper to one's god. Who can know the will of the gods in heaven? Who can understand that plans of the underworld gods? Where have humans learned the way of a god?" Do you see the frustration that's there? He has no idea what his so-called deity wants. They don't tell you because they can't speak. There's another pagan prayer we have where there's the prayer engages in some confession over

sins and so on, and then he says, "The transgression which I have committed, indeed I do not know. The sin which I've done, indeed I do not know." Whether he is committing sin and he talks about man, man knows nothing. What does he know? Then he says, "Whether he is committing sin or doing good, he does not even know." Why doesn't he know? Because the pagan gods and goddesses don't tell him. They don't make known their will. Have you ever thought what a privilege it is to have a God who reveals what he wants to you and you know what his will is because he makes it plain to you? What a gift and when he prays "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will," what a relief that is in a way. You're not in the dark about what your God wants.

Notice there's also a certain correction here when Paul says "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will," etc. what does he mean by "his will"? Now, here you have to watch yourself because we have a tendency, don't we, to think about what we think of God's will and read it into Paul's text. What do we think of when we think of God's will, etc.? Well, we tend to think about whether you should visit your Aunt Tillie this coming weekend. Is that the Lord's will? That's not what Paul is talking about here. Or whether you should go to South Carolina or Clemson for university. That's not what he's talking about. Or whether it's God's will that you marry Heather or what's-her-name. That's not what's being talked about here when Paul refers to God's will. We always think in terms of our life choices and our circumstances and, "What's the will of God for me in this?" Well, I'm not saying that we shouldn't be in prayer for those matters, etc. but that's not what Paul means about God's will.

I don't like to go running all over the place but let me give you a cross-reference to Ephesians 5:17, for example, in the following context, so that you can see the way this is used. You notice in Ephesians 5:17, Paul says, "For this reason, do not become foolish but understand what the will of the Lord is." And then you notice what he does in verse 18, he says, "And do not become drunk with wine which is debauchery, but keep on being filled with the Spirit." Now, what does that mean? Well, it means at least this much: that part of what the will of the Lord is, is that you keep on being filled with the Spirit. Well, what does that mean? Well, he goes on to talk about it, "speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." Let me just flesh it out for you: to keep on being filled with the Spirit in Ephesians 5:18 which is part of knowing what the will of the Lord is, to keep on being filled with the Spirit shows itself in joyful worship, verse 19, in a grateful attitude, verse 20, and in balanced relationships, verse 21. Then he expands on those balanced relationships in verse 21, in chapter 5, verse 22 through chapter 6, verse 9, and he expands and explores those matters and he speaks of relationships in marriage and in the home and at work. So you have from Ephesians 5:17 on to chapter 6, verse 9, you have what the will of the Lord is. And what is that will? It's how you function in your marriage and in your home with your kids and with your work, and that's how you know whether you're being filled with the Spirit or not because that's not how you feel a certain way, but it's what kind of quality your relationships are in your marriage and in your home and in your work and how you do your work.

Now, that's what the will of the Lord is but that's sort of what you might call, well, the will of God for your life, the way you ought to function as a Christian and the Lord spells

it out there through Paul. Now there's another text that I think we ought to mention because it uses this will of the Lord or will of God again. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-3 for example. You notice that there Paul talks about them walking. He says, "they are walking just as you have received from us how you ought to walk and to please God." So walking and pleasing God, how do they know how to walk and please God? Well, 1 Thessalonians 4:2, "you have received commands from us regarding those things." then he speaks in verse 3, "for this is the will of God, your sanctification, your holiness of life." Then he specifies a part of what sanctification involves. "This is the will of God, your sanctification that you abstain from sexual immorality," porneia. That's part of the will of God for your life, you abstain from sexual immorality and so on.

You see, this isn't in the text, alright? But can you imagine for a moment the Apostle Paul and a student, a Christian student who is attending the University of Thessalonica and he belongs to a Christian fellowship at the University of Thessalonica, alright? And they've been dealing this semester with relationships and all that sort of thing and so he happens to catch Paul and he says to him, "Paul, I'm so glad I caught you. I've just got something I want to talk to you about. You see, there are these two girls there and I think I want to pursue them but I don't know which one to pursue and I want to know what the Lord's will is in this thing. You see, there's Heather and then there's Bridget and I'm just in a real dither about what the will of God is in this," and so on. Now, what would Paul say to him? Well, I think and I understand, I don't know for sure but I think Paul would say to him something like this, he would say, "Well, Alexander, this Heather and Bridget, are they Christians?" "Oh yes, they both love the Lord. They've been walking with him for a couple of years at least," and so on. "Okay. Now, are they congenial? I mean, they're not like...are either one of them like a battleaxe that's always complaining and bringing up conflict and so on?" "Oh, no, no. They're both very compatible. They both could be Miss Compatibility." "Okay, then, Alexander, are you attracted to either?" "Oh yes, both of them, you see, that's what the real problem is and I need to know what the Lord's will is for me in this." I think Paul would say to him, "Well, pick one." And I think Paul might say something like this, "Alexander, you may think this is heresy but I don't think the Lord's very concerned. I don't think the Lord cares too much which one of those girls you try to marry. But here's the will of God for your life, your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality. Now, whichever one you go after, you treat her with absolute purity. That's the will of God. Who cares who you choose?" We don't do that when we think of the will of God, we think of his circumstantial will about my affairs. It really doesn't matter too much. Where Paul places the emphasis is not on the circumstantial but on the substantial. We need to make that correction in our thinking.

Now, you wonder, "Well, where will I find God's will for my life?" Well, for us, we usually find it as we've tried to point out where the language is used in the New Testament, you usually find it in the apostle's writings, don't you? For example, well, read Ephesians, we talked about Ephesians, read Ephesians 4-6, read Colossians 3-4, read 1 Thessalonians 4-5, read 1 Peter 2:11 through chapter 5, read Romans 12-15 or 16. You remember that Paul talks about the will of God in Romans 12:2 and he talks about that you might discern, approve the will of God, what is good and well pleasing and perfect. Have you ever thought that maybe what Paul is saying in the rest of Romans 12 through

15 is unpacking that phrase as to what the will of God that is good and well pleasing and perfect is for the life of believers? You get it there and that's correction I think we need to make.

But there is also here a certain discernment, isn't there? You notice, "that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all or with all Spirit given wisdom and understanding." I know the word is "spiritual" in some of our translations but it's related to Spirit in Holy Spirit and it means Spirit given; it comes from the Holy Spirit. So you need to know the knowledge of his will but with all Spirit given wisdom and insight. This idea seems to be and we need to have not only filled with the knowledge of his will but have this Spirit given sense to know how to do and apply that will in our circumstances and in our situations in a proper way. Sometimes that's necessary. A very basic and a little bit perhaps, well, not very sophisticated example but William Sangster was a Methodist minister back in the 1900s, 1940s, 1950s, 1960s, I think he died in 1960 maybe, but he was a Methodist minister in England and when he was in Scarborough in a pastorate he had a rather peculiar eccentric fellow, apparently a godly man, he was a barber but just a little bit different. This barber thought that he needed to bear witness for his Savior in his work and to his customers. So a fellow came in and got in the chair and he lathered him up for a shave and the guy got his razor out and so on and he turned and he said to the fellow, "Sir, are you ready for eternity?" And the guy jumped out of the chair, lather and all, and beat a hasty retreat.

You need to know, you need to have some sense in how to apply what you know to be the will of God and that's the Spirit given wisdom and insight, but then there's also a certain goal here. What's the goal of this being filled with the knowledge of his will? Verse 10, "to walk worthy of the Lord," and he means the Lord Jesus, "to walk worthy of the Lord," literally "to all pleasing or pleasing him in every way." That's where the what and the how are to lead us. This is the bent of the whole thing, to give Christ pleasure by the way I live. That's the one thing that matters; that's what is to be our focus.

Now, Kent Hugh the pastor and biblical expositor, has told about his, well, at the time he wrote about it, it was his three year old golden retriever, Daisy, she may be dead now for all we know. But he said she provided him with an example of someone with a desire to please because that's all he said his dog wanted to do. He said, "Daisy dutifully watches me and listens for my voice inflections or gestures that indicate my pleasure. Her posture seems to say, 'Just tell me what you want and I'll do it.'" Imagine a dog like that. He said, "Daisy doesn't bark. Daisy doesn't jump up. She doesn't paw the screen door or anything, she just stares at the door," he says, "until I'm overcome with guilt and let her out." He said, "Daisy worships me." Now, he said also, "Daisy, though, isn't very smart. She doesn't understand abstractions. She doesn't think much beyond her toys or her next meal or how to get a scratch between the ears. She can't read. She has no eschatology. She has no doctrine of the future of resurrection, of judgment and reward. Daisy's ultimate vision is the next dog biscuit, but though she has no doctrine of future reward, she wants to please her master." Now, that's kind of a doggy way to come at it but that ought to be the whole focus for us, to walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way.

Ann Ortlund wrote a book on worship called "Up With Worship" and she had the sentiment of a worshiper as he or she comes into the worship service and this was what she said, "This church service, Lord, is for you. I'm here to give you pleasure." And apply that not only to worship but to all of our walk. "I'm here to give you pleasure." That's where this should all go. So this is a petition we should pray, "that you be filled with the knowledge of his will with all Spirit given wisdom and insight to walk worthy of the Lord, pleasing him in every way." Praying for others. Pray for ourselves.

Now then, thirdly, let's look at the desired outcome of this prayer in the last of verse 10 through verse 14 and if his petition is answered in verse 9 and the first part of verse 10, this will be the overflow from it, that is, "bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and longsuffering with joy, giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us," etc. Now, I know some of your versions break that up and they make some of these verbs or verb forms into other petitions but that's not the way it really is. Those are all, sorry for the grammar, those are all participles. The main petition is in verse 9 and the first of verse 10, "that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will," etc. And then if that is so, then there is going to be a certain overflow that's going to work out in certain ways.

In what ways? Well, bearing fruit in every good work and growing in the knowledge of God. You'll be a certain kind of people if this petition is answered. You'll be, for one thing, a progressing people and that's in the last of verse 10, "bearing fruit in every good work." You'll be a transformed people. Your life will be different and you'll be increasing in the knowledge or growing in the knowledge of God. That's not just knowledge about God but a growing experiential intimacy with God, so you'll be a progressing people.

Not only that, you'll be a durable people. Verse 11 where he says, "being strengthened with all power in line with his glorious might for all endurance and longsuffering." That's important. The power is for endurance and longsuffering. The reason you're strengthened with all power is so you can face endurance, so you can endure because you're going to face trouble and difficulty and that's the idea here. You have all kinds of power given by Christ for all kinds of trouble but Christ clearly fortifies his people for the flack they're going to face and so they will be a durable people. They are strengthened for endurance and longsuffering. A durable people.

But then you'll also be a grateful people, verses 12 to 14, "giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us." Now, you notice that Paul spends a little bit more time on the grateful people here, "giving thanks." And you notice you give thanks because God has met our inadequacy, verse 12, "giving thanks to the Father who qualified us." He gives thanks because he has dealt with our bondage. "He rescued us out of the authority of darkness," verse 13. And you give thanks because he has dealt with our guilt, "in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." Actually, though, what I think Paul is doing here is using verses 13 and 14 to flesh out verse 12, that is, I think what he's saying is: how has God qualified us for having a share of the inheritance of the saints in life? How has he qualified us so that we will have a share in the future inheritance that he has promised to his people? Well, he has done two things, verse 13, "he has rescued us out of

the authority of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love." That's one thing. In other words, how has he qualified us? By rescue and he's rescued us so that we have a new freedom. He has rescued us out of the authority of darkness. You might want to read "darkness" with a capital "D." I don't mean that it's deified but I mean the darkness here is viewed as a power and a maligned power. You might say perhaps a demonic power. We're held under bondage but God has qualified us in that he has rescued us out of the authority of darkness and he's taken us into a whole new regime. There's a new freedom, he's transferred us into the kingdom of the Son of his love.

I don't know what your experience has been in paying state income taxes over the years of your life, but part of our time was spent in the state of Maryland and Maryland really knows how to tax. So you pay income tax. Not all states have income tax, state income tax, some say they don't but they do have a little and so on, but Maryland, they have it. They really have it. And then about 1994, we left Maryland and went back to Reformed Seminary for another stint there so we were living in Mississippi. Now since we spent part of the year, like about half the year in Maryland before we moved to Mississippi, I had to pay at least a half a year worth of income tax to the state of Maryland. But you know what those states are like, the next year, they send you the instructions and all the forms, it's 1995 and here the state of Maryland sends me the whole income tax packet. But I had lived, you see, in Mississippi the whole year and so with a little bit of cockiness and defiance, I walked over holding that Maryland state income tax packet and I stood over my wastebasket and dropped it in because they had no authority or jurisdiction over me at all and I didn't even need to give them a phone call about it. I had been transferred into a wholly different regime. I was under a new government, a different government.

Now, that's what Paul is saying in principle, "God has rescued you out of the authority of darkness and he has put you under a whole new regime. He's transferred you into the kingdom of the Son of his love. There's a new freedom you have, but then he's also qualified you with a new forgiveness because he is not only giving you rescue, he's giving you redemption." Verse 14, "in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." The redemption is the buying back of someone out of bondage by the payment of a price and redemption is bigger than just the forgiveness of sins. But when Paul mentions redemption here in verse 14, he wants to underscore a certain aspect or fruit of that redemption; he wants to underscore the forgiveness of sins. He wants them to know that God has dealt with their guilt and so you have a new forgiveness here.

Don't you feel it sometimes? Notice here he says, "in whom we have," it's present tense, so the idea there may be, I can't be sure, he's not just talking about forgiveness of sins initially when we come to Christ, he may be talking about what we enjoy of Christ's redemption continually; even as Christian believers, we enjoy the forgiveness of sins. Don't you just sense that sometimes in worship? Now, please don't go off on some crazy binge at all but doesn't it get you sometimes in the morning worship when you're reciting the Apostles Creed? And doesn't your blood stir just a little? I know we have to keep together so don't mess anything up, but when you get to that part where it says, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting," don't you just begin to want to take off? When you say, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins,"

there's a sense in which you want to add just in there, just between the clauses, "Yes!" You have a new forgiveness. God has qualified you with that. He dealt with your guilt. What a gift. That's why we're giving thanks to the Father. We're grateful people.

Now let me just try to pull it together this way, this gratitude in verses 12 to 14. It reminds me of a story I read of Kenny McDonald. He was known as Kenny Ban or Fair Kenny. He was in the island of Lewis off the northwest coast of Scotland. The island of Lewis is a sort of a different entity in a way. This was back in like 1949, 1950. There was a revival going on on the island of Lewis. I don't mean that it just consisted of so-called revival meetings, they were having meetings because the Holy Spirit was convicting people and bringing them to Christ so there was a real revival there. But the island of Lewis has a heritage of, I don't know what you want to say, Reformed faith or Calvinism and so on, and I don't know about today but at that time kids on the island of Lewis would know, read, have memorized the Westminster Shorter Catechism. They just knew that and it was such respect for the Bible there that even if a home, even if they weren't believers, even if they had not made a profession of Christian faith, there was such reverence for the Scriptures and so on that they would have a kind of family worship, a reading of the Scriptures morning and evening in their homes. It was pervasive and here was Kenny McDonald, he was about 29 years old and he apparently was under some conviction. He was not necessarily a profane fellow, he was just into drinking and dancing and so on. He was not happy and so on and what was there for him to live for?

Well, he was thinking of that at the time. He had ordered a couple of bottles of stuff for the new year but he was apparently so concerned to drown his convictions that before the new year came, he took out one of his bottles that he had stashed away and went out behind the church after church service and drank practically the whole thing. He was just miserable. He finally told his aunt, apparently, that he would attend an after-meeting that was held in her house. They would have meetings and then they would go in maybe about 9 o'clock at night and they would have meetings in cottages and homes and so on. So he told her that he would go there and he did. He went there. He heard Duncan Campbell, the visiting evangelist speaking and so on, and something apparently from what Duncan Campbell said or perhaps it just came from his general Bible knowledge, the words of Jesus from John 14, "I am the way," those words seemed to sear themselves into Kenny McDonald's mind and gray matter, "I am the way."

Well, the time came, the preacher was speaking and then he said, "Now, a room will be cleared and all those who have come to the place where you feel that nothing in this world can satisfy your heart, please get up and make your way there. I cannot convert anyone but God can and he will fill the longings of your soul." Well, the sheer horror of this, because everybody in that closed community really knew Kenny McDonald and so on, to walk to that room and so on, but suddenly he said he felt an amazing strength and he stood up and in his heart he found himself saying, "Lord, if you'll take me, I'll come now." And off he went and he said he was filled with unspeakable joy and his heart was absolutely free; that that night in that home, his aunt's home, God met him and brought him to his Son. And then here's what he says, "I never ever looked back. God saved me that night in the house and he will never hear the end of it. I will praise him throughout

eternity for his patience and grace with a sinner like me. I've never lost what he gave me that night. In addition to the joy of salvation, he gave me tears and I've never lost the tears." Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us for a share of the inheritance of the saints in light.

"God saved me that night in the house and he will never hear the end of it." And we should stop there, right where Paul wants his prayer to end, with a grateful people, folks who have never recovered, with people, for instance, at First Presbyterian Church who can say, "God saved me and he will never hear the end of it."

Let us pray.

Now our Father, grant that we might be filled with the knowledge of your will, with all Spirit given wisdom and insight, that we might walk worthy of the Lord Jesus, pleasing him in every way. In Jesus' name. Amen.