

Praying for Others

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Date: 12 January 2020

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[0 : 00] Well, when your pastor takes vacation, it's a good thing for a couple of reasons. Number one, he gets to rest. And number two, we get to hear from other preachers in the area.

And we are very blessed this morning to have Brian Counts, if you want to come on up, Brian, from Village 7. Brian is the associate pastor there. And we're just very fortunate to have him with us. So thank you, brother. All right. Good morning. It is good to be back.

I've been here a number of times over the years and been able to worship with you all. And so it's good to see a lot of familiar faces and old friends and some new ones, too. So if you would please turn with me this morning to Colossians 1.

In a moment, we'll read verses 1 through 9 of Colossians 1. Did I say 1 through 9?

[1 : 01] I meant 9 through 14. I'll get there. I've had coffee. I'll wake up in a moment. All right. So one of the good things about being a guest preacher is I get to preach whatever I want to.

I asked Matthew, what do you want me to preach? And he said, whatever you like. And I said, well, okay, that is great. But it's also a little hard in another way because it takes time to think, what am I going to preach on?

Instead of just saying I'll take the next passage in the book you're going through. And I thought, well, I know your church a little bit more than other churches. But whether it's this church, my church, or any church, I know that people sitting here in any congregation and here this morning are going to be struggling with friends, loved ones that they know who are hurting in any number of ways.

And if I ask this morning, who here has a friend, has a family member, has a fellow church member, a fellow Christian, a child, a spouse who is going through some trial in their life?

All of us could raise their hand. Some trial that comes from the outside, from the circumstances of life, or some trial that comes from the inside through their own sinful choices and decisions.

[2 : 17] People struggling with finances, with career, with sin, with addiction, with conflict. Already, I imagine you're thinking of people as I am thinking of my friends and loved ones and fellow church members.

So as we read this passage this morning, I want you to be thinking, what does Paul here, who wrote these words, what does Paul have for me as I think about how to help these friends, loved ones, church members in my life that are struggling?

So let's read together from God's word. This is the book of Colossians chapter 1, verses 9 through 14. And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

Being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy. Giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light.

[3 : 31] He has delivered 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.

Amen. This is God's word. Would you pray with me as we start? Father, we are here this morning to come into your presence. And we are here to come into your presence only by the grace of you, the work of your Son, Jesus, the power of your Holy Spirit.

Father, as we have worshiped so far this morning, we now want to continue to worship you as we meditate together on your word. And Father, this is an exciting moment because we know you love your word and we know you love your people.

So as these two things come together, your word and your people, we pray that you would be glorified, that you would bless us for our good, and that your spirit would work in great ways. And we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amen. Now, if you had your dear friends or family members, church members who were struggling in mind as we read that, how can we be of help to them? Clearly, the answer is we can pray.

[4 : 36] We can pray for them. Now, that's not church 404. That's church 101. You know that already. I know to pray for those that I love. And it's inspiring, in a sense, because it's so simple, but it's also so powerful, because what's the first thing that Paul does when he hears about these Christians that he's writing to?

The first thing he did, despite all his knowledge, experience, spiritual gifts, his apostle-ness, the first thing he does is pray. It's so simple, and that's what he does.

And we think, yes, I love these folks who are struggling. I want to be of help, so I want to pray, but we don't so often. Sometimes we do, but none of us pray, myself included, like we want to pray. I've never met a Christian that said, yeah, my prayer life, it's actually better than it should be. I think that's kind of the part of my Christian life I can check off. I'm yet to meet that Christian. If that's you after the church, don't say that to me, because there's something else probably going on with pride or something in your heart.

But all of us want to improve and do better. And sometimes we catch ourselves, we're talking to that friend or loved one or church member who's struggling, and we say, oh, our heart is breaking for you.

[5 : 53] I will pray, but is there anything I can do? Have you ever said that? And then you think, that didn't come out right, right? But, is there anything I can do?

I'm going to pray, but it's almost like we're apologizing that that's all we can do. It's almost like we want to say, I'm sorry that prayer's all I've got. And at best it says, we just want to be of more help. And at worst it says, I don't think prayer's going to really help. And if I could do something tangible, that would help. But prayer, eh, not so much. And all of us are there sometimes, aren't we?

Some of us are convinced at times that prayer is working. All of us are doubting at some point. Is prayer really doing any help at all? But Paul here gives us some words that are so helpful because they give us a model of what to pray.

Because sometimes we are praying for those. We know it's going to be helpful, and we are praying, but we're just kind of, are you like this sometimes like me? You're just wandering around in prayer, not sure what to say or to ask for.

[6 : 57] And so you use just some general prayer terms like, Lord, please bless, and please help, and please work. And those are great things to pray, but we're just kind of, like I said, wandering around, not sure the words.

But Paul here with these words gives us a great model. And I encourage you sometimes to pray these word for word for someone or to use it as a jumping off place to shape your own prayers. And he gives us a motivation to pray because, like we said, he prays for all of his gifting and experience. It's the first thing he does. So he gives us motivation. And you'll see as we go through these words, you'll see that what he's doing is he's saying, God, you've begun a work of grace in these people's lives, and now I want you to further it.

I can have trust you're going to further it because you've already started it. And the kind of work that you've started is the kind of work you're going to keep doing. We're going to keep going further in God's gospel and in his truth.

So that's what we're going to be seeing this morning. We're really going to only have two points as we look at it. The first one is going to be when to pray for others. And secondly, what to pray for others.

[8 : 10] It's just that simple. When do we pray for others? And secondly, what do we pray for others as we pray? So first, when to pray for others. And you don't have to be a New Testament or Greek scholar to look with me at verse 9 and say, when should I pray?

All the time. How does Paul pray? What does he say? Look with me. Verse 9. Unceasingly. Unceasingly. Ever since he's heard of these folks, he's been praying for them unceasingly.

Now, I don't think that means that's all he's thought about 24-7 is his prayers for these Christians. It can't be true. He has to have lived his life.

He has to have ministered to the people in front of him, for instance. But what it means unceasingly is he prays regularly. He prays consistently for these people.

And it's an amazing statement to say, I pray unceasingly for someone. But it's more amazing, and I've said this already, it's more amazing when you think he's never even met these Christians and he's praying unceasingly for them.

[9 : 15] It seems that someone who heard Paul preach in Ephesus took the gospel message to Colossae, preached it there, and a church started. And now, years later, Paul, having never been to that city, having never met these people, gets a report from that same friend who was converted under Paul and took the gospel to Colossae.

He hears a report from that man. And so now Paul writes a letter to help these Christians. And in that letter, he says, I've never met you, but I want you to know, ever since I heard the report about you, I have prayed unceasingly, regularly, and consistently.

Now, I hear that, and I think, that's encouraging. But then I think, man, I can't pray regularly and consistently for the Christians I do know. And here, Paul is doing it for those he's never even met. Maybe you feel that same kind of discouragement. And I want to encourage you, and I want to encourage myself as we think about when to pray for others with this. The same things that qualified Paul to pray and the same resources he had to pray unceasingly for others are yours and they're mine.

There wasn't something special about Paul being an apostle that helped him pray unceasingly. There wasn't something special. He didn't have some special spiritual secret sauce that allowed him to do this that you don't have and I don't have.

[10 : 46] So we can be discouraged on one hand when we hear that, but be encouraged on the other that the same way Paul comes before God into his presence is the same way you and I do.

Paul is no more qualified to pray than you are. Because what qualifies you and Paul to pray? Grace. Same thing that qualifies me to pray.

It's not my works. It's not my righteousness. It's not my consistency. It's not how much I mean it when I pray. The thing that qualifies me to pray is grace and grace alone.

Through Jesus Christ, we have access, the book of Ephesians says, with confidence and boldness to come into God's presence. That was true for Paul and it's true for you.

So be encouraged that what qualified Paul qualifies you. And you might think, man, I wish I had some other spiritual gift than the one I have. Sometimes some of you might look and say, I wish I had a gift of ministry that put me more up front.

[11 : 53] I'm always in the background. Or some of you are up front and I wish, man, I wish I could be in the background. Some of you have gifts of service. Some of you have gifts of teaching. Some of you have gifts that come with age and experience.

Some of you have the gifts that come with youth and vitality. And you can look at someone else and say, man, I wish I had that. I wish I had the wisdom or I wish I had the vitality or I wish I had something else to be of more service in the kingdom.

But prayer is something for the kingdom that you and I can all do. Because we're all qualified the same way Paul was. And it takes, of course, more than just being qualified because no one has ever prayed unceasingly by accident.

Have you ever noticed this? Someone doesn't develop a lifestyle of prayer by accident. It takes some planning as well. So if we're going to pray for those people that we have in mind in our life, that God's placed on our hearts, if we're going to pray for them regularly and consistently, we have to have some kind of plan to do it.

And now that could be as simple as setting a reminder on your phone. We're all carrying around these phones nowadays, of course, and they can be trouble for us or they can be a great blessing for us.

[13 : 08] And one way they can really help is something as simple as, I'm going to set a reminder to pray. Or if you don't want to go to all the trouble of setting the reminder yourself, you can download a prayer app. Did you know they have such things?

You can download an app on your phone that will remind you to pray for certain people or groups or your church, your neighbors at a certain time every day, every week, whatever it is.

That could be your plan to pray regularly. That would be great. It could be a regular prayer meeting you go to with your whole church or just a small group. It could be a card taped to your mirror in

your bathroom so that you don't forget to pray for your family members, your friends, your kids that God has placed on your heart.

I'm trying a new system. For years, I used something on my phone, basically like prayer cards on my phone that I would flip through, you know, ways to pray for my wife or for my kids or for my church or for my family or for my neighbors.

I've gone back to something old school that I keep in my pocket at all times. I had to dig it out of a museum. It's called paper. I went way back in time and it's a notebook and it's got a pencil in it.

[14 : 14] And when I think of something I want to be praying for, I can write it down right there. And I don't have to worry about updates and operating systems and all those kinds of things because it's there. And so I've got a page in my notebook for my wife.

I've got a page in my notebook for my kids, for my church, for those that I work with, for other churches here in town, for all these things that I want to be praying regularly for because it's not going to happen by accident.

And you might have tried a system for a while and it worked for a week and then it didn't work and then you think, I'm not going to bother anymore because it didn't keep working. And I want to say, try it again because at least you prayed for a week.

At least you prayed for two weeks. Maybe the system you start isn't going to take you all the way until God takes you home, but at least it gets you praying for a while. And then you try something else because you're qualified to pray by grace like Paul was, but it's going to take some planning as well.

And it's also going to take an awareness of God and an awareness of people. To pray regularly, we need to be aware of what God's doing around us and we need to be aware of the people around us both.

[15 : 26] Too often I get going on my to-do list, I keep my head down and I don't look up. I keep my head down thinking about me, myself, and I.

My problems, my fears, my anxieties, and I forget to look around at my friends, my fellow church members, my family members and say, what's going on with them?

What obstacles are they facing? What pressure are they under? What trial are they going through? What stress and anxiety is there in their life?

I forget to be aware of the people around me and I forget to be aware of God and think, God, what are you doing in their lives through that? God, what are you doing in the lives of my neighbors on my street that don't know you?

What are they facing that might be an open door for you to work? We have to be aware of God and aware of people around us. We have to see them as God sees them.

[16 : 25] We have to see our fellow Christians, your fellow church members here at this church and your small group. You have to see them as God sees them. And that's where Paul starts. He says earlier in this book, just a few verses ahead of what we read or behind what we read.

He said, ever since I heard, I haven't stopped to thank God for you. Because he sees them as God sees them. He sees them as people God is loving.

God is at work in. And so we have to see people like God sees them and ask, God, what are you doing? And then begin to pray about those things.

Those can be triggers for prayer. When you hear about a great success or blessing in a friend's life, are you thinking, thank you, God. I pray that you would use that in their lives. When you hear about their struggles, are you thinking, ah, God, that has been a long-term struggle.

Or it's suddenly just come out of nowhere. What are you going to do in this dear friend or family member's life? So when do we pray? Regularly and consistently. Because God's qualified us.

[17 : 31] We just have to plan to do it and be aware of God and people. But secondly, and this will get us more into the heart of these verses that we read. Secondly, let's ask, what do we pray?

Okay, now I know I should pray regularly and consistently. What are the kinds of things I should be praying? And Paul answers that for us here. I want you to think, though, just a little bit more carefully before we answer it about these people that you're already thinking of that we've talked about.

These friends, family members, kids, spouses, parents, church members who are struggling with, like we said, finances, job, sin, addictions, marriage troubles, whatever it might be.

What do you pray for them? If you have a child, whether they're 3 or 30, and they hit some kind of obstacle, it could be academic, it could be physical with their health, it could be social, if they hit some kind of obstacle in their life, are you like me?

And the first and too often only thing you pray is, God, get them out of pain. Get them back to a life of convenience and ease and success, and just get them out of this hard thing.

[18 : 43] That's a great thing to pray. I don't want to shame any of us for praying that. But Paul's going to show us to lift our eyes up a little bit and pray even bigger than that. If it's a friend who's going through a marriage crisis.

So often, yes, we pray, God, strengthen the marriage. But what else can we pray? If you have a friend, like we've said, who's destroying their life through addiction or sinful choices, how do you pray for them?

This few verses that we read are only 125 words in this translation. But if you're like me, the first time you read it, and maybe this is the first time you've read it ever, maybe in a long time this morning, it takes a while to read through these words because they're so dense.

Paul packs so much into this paragraph. When I first preached this sermon a few months ago, I had to read through this paragraph more often than maybe I typically read through a text I'm going to preach on because it was just like I said, so dense and so packed.

And the more I studied it, the more I spent time with it. The way I say we answer this question about what to pray for others is with this summary statement that I think everything in these verses hangs on.

[19 : 51] And the summary statement is this, to pray for others to have trust that changes their walk. Pray for others to have trust that changes their walk.

Now, that's what we're going to spend the rest of our time unfolding, unpacking together this morning. Let's go back and start at verse 9 where Paul prays that these folks he's never met may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

Now, there's a lot of words in there, every word in there. You know the dictionary definition of knowledge, wisdom, understanding. But that's not a way we normally talk.

We don't normally talk, God, fill me with the knowledge of your will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. So what's he saying? Well, let's start with knowledge. The Greek word here for knowledge isn't just facts.

It's not just, I know 2 plus 2 equals 4 and I can pass a math test. It's not just, I know King David came after King Saul and I can pass a Bible test. It's not that kind of knowledge.

[20 : 55] The word Paul uses says thoroughly, inside and out. I know it completely. That we're filled with knowledge, something you know thoroughly and completely.

And not just know it, but you apply it. That's where this Greek word is leading us to understand what Paul is saying. I don't just know something thoroughly, I live it. It changes me.

That's another way you and I say trust. We know something, but we don't act on it until we trust it. So that's why I say the word trust. To pray for others to have trust.

And that they may be filled with this kind of knowledge of what? God's will. Now you and I, when we usually pray, God, show me your will. What kind of prayers are we praying? God, show me which decision to make.

Right? Show me your will, God. Show me, do I take this job in a faraway state or a job here close to home? Do I marry this person? Do I go to that college? Do I take a gap year?

[21 : 55] God, show me what to do, your will. And that's a great thing to pray, but I don't think that's what Paul is saying here. When he says God's will here, and you take that word will and how he uses it in Colossians, and if we had time, we could compare it with how he uses that word in Ephesians and other letters.

When Paul says God's will, what he means is God's desire and his plan and his execution of that plan to redeem all things.

Nothing less than that. God's will, therefore, is a huge concept. You and I live in a fallen world where everything is broken.

Everything is touched and destroyed to some level by sin. God made the whole thing beautiful, perfect. He made it for us to have a perfect relationship with him and each other in a world that worked for us, where there would be no pain and suffering.

But our sin came and broke. As the old Christmas carol says, the curse, as far as the curse is found, joy to the world, that's everywhere. Everywhere. The curse goes everywhere.

[23 : 06] And what is God's will? To fix it all. Not just our relationship with him. Not just to get our souls saved and into heaven. But to fix everything.

Our relationship with him. Our relationship with other people. Our relationship with creation. He's going to come and redeem everything. Another way is to say he's going to bring his kingdom. God's will is his kingdom.

And it's going to work itself out in all parts of our lives. In all parts of creation. So it's God's desire, plan, and the execution of that plan, which is certain to redeem all things.

So God, give us a thorough and complete knowledge that we trust of your desire to save and restore and redeem me personally and cosmically. The whole thing.

I told you this was a dense and packed passage. Just these few words already. We see so much about the whole scope of God's redemption. Not only in our own lives personally, but cosmically to all things.

[24 : 11] And I love that he prays for them to have a knowledge of God's will. But not just have it. What does he say? Be filled with it. Because doesn't every Christian have that kind of knowledge to some degree?

Or they wouldn't be a Christian. So he says, I want you to be filled with it. It's like when they said to Jesus, Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. That's like my theme prayer for my life.

Lord, I believe, help my unbelief. The help my unbelief part, that's the gap where I need to be filled with these things. That unbelief part in your life, Lord, help me with my unbelief.

That's the gap where you need to be filled with a certain thorough knowledge that you act on of God's saving and redeeming of all things. At all parts of creation.

He prays that they'll be filled with the knowledge of his will. Well, then, if you go further with me in verse 9, how he says, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

[25 : 13] Now, spiritual means Holy Spirit. So that means God gives it. We don't go out and get it on our own. Wisdom and understanding, those are the same two words that King Solomon prayed to God in the Old Testament when he prayed for wisdom.

God gave me wisdom and understanding. And wisdom is, like we normally think of it, I know which decision to make. I'm wise. I know how to act.

But it's more than that in the Scripture. Wisdom in the Scripture is skill, someone once said, in godly living. Skill in godly living. In other words, you know how to live as a follower of Jesus in this world.

Skill in godly living. So, God, fill me with a knowledge of your will, with all spiritual wisdom and understanding. What he's praying for is that these people would have a certainty and trust in God's good news of grace that works out in their lives.

That the trust they have in God's grace doesn't just end at their point of conversion, but then it extends into their marriage troubles, into their financial stresses, into their health problems, and that they see how to bring the good news of God's grace into those problems and apply it.

[26 : 34] So, let me give you an example. Let's say that your child is struggling with being rejected by a friend, as every child will at some point, or a group of friends. They're struggling with feeling on the outside.

What's the parent's heart's first thing they want to pray for? God, change those other kids so they love my kid and they stop feeling bad. Paul here is praying more than that.

That's not necessarily a bad thing to pray, but he's praying more. He's praying, God, I pray that you would give my child a certainty of the knowledge of what you're doing, of your salvation, of your grace, and of your love, so that as they're rejected by others, they can trust that they are accepted by you, and that acceptance will become more to them than it ever could have meant if they weren't rejected.

You see how Paul is praying here? He's praying that that grace that they received at conversion would be worked out in the specific problems that they have. If you have a friend who's suffering with a health problem, maybe even a terminal health problem, and many of us, I'm sure, do.

I do right now. Certainly, we pray for their health, for their recovery. But according to this, we can pray for even more. God, give them a certainty that you're going to restore all things, and that even when this earthly life ends, it's not the end of the story, because God is going to bring a new heavens and a new earth, and restore and renew everything, cosmically speaking.

[28 : 04] These are great words to pray for your kids, for your friends who are struggling with health problems. It's a great thing to pray for the children and youth of this church. Whenever you have a baptism here, the part at the end says, do you promise to assist this family in raising this child in the nurture and admonition of the Lord?

And probably all of you raise your hands, just like I do. And you think, two weeks later, I don't even know that child's name anymore. Unless you personally have a friendship with the family, how can you keep that promise then, with these words, to pray for the children and youth of this church? And what great things to pray for yourself. What are you facing? What's your struggle? Where's the point of temptation that you keep giving into?

You need to pray these words for yourself, or even more, ask someone to pray them for you. When was the last time you asked someone to pray for you in a way that was more than just about the circumstances in your life, which are great things to ask for prayer for?

I'm not shaming that at all. More than just, I'm taking a trip. Pray that I'll be safe. More than just, I'm trying to make a decision. Pray that I have wisdom. Ask someone to pray for you at the point where you're struggling maybe in temptation, struggling with doubt, that you would be filled with the knowledge of God's will, of grace for you personally and cosmically.

[29 : 31] And then I love when you go further with me into verse 10. This all gets worked out with the word that Paul uses there, walk. That it gets worked out in your walk, to have trust that changes your walk.

Now in the Bible, walk is not going out for a stroll. Walk is your whole pattern and course trajectory of your life, your behavior over the long term, your disposition over the long term, your choices over the long term, your loves over the long term, your desires over the long term, your walk the whole of your life over time.

And Paul prays for some very specific ways that this trust for the Colossians would be worked out in their walk. And the first way that he prays in verse 10 is that it would be a worthy walk.

Worthy walk. That word is all over the Bible. And for years, I have to confess to you, I thought it just meant your behavior. That your externals would be lined up with God's commandments.

Now that's a great thing. But you know who had that in the Bible more than others perhaps? The Pharisees. And they don't get a lot of good pub in the Bible. They're not the heroes.

[30 : 43] Because their insides weren't lining up with a worthy walk. They were doing all of those good things for all the wrong reasons.

To have the right reasons to do the right thing takes a humility before God and an acceptance of His grace and a joy in being free, as free and as righteous as Jesus.

And so that's a worthy walk. To do the right thing for the right reason, out of love for God. He also prays that they would have a fruitful walk. That they would bear fruit.

I think about the fruit of the Spirit that people would increase in love and joy and peace and patience, etc. Isn't that a great thing to pray for a friend, like we've said, who's struggling with a particular sin?

God, give them a knowledge of Your grace and will in all wisdom in this part of their life that gives them a worthy and a fruitful walk. Those are powerful things to pray for someone who's struggling with that kind of sin temptation.

[31 : 47] Or to ask someone to pray that for yourself, like we said. He also prays that their walk would not only be worthy and fruitful, but also powerful, in verse 11.

And that they would be strengthened with all power, he says, according to God's glorious might. We need to underline right here, that's a lot of power.

power according to God's glorious might. God's might. How strong is God? power as strong as anything could possibly be.

according to His might. According to His might. According to His glorious might. In other words, He's not just praying you can bench the bar and get the bar off your chest. He's praying you can power lift beyond a world record.

Power according to God's glorious might. To pray that for a friend who is struggling with depression. Struggling with the dark clouds never going away.

[32 : 48] God, that they would know Your power according to Your glorious might. So praying for a walk that's worthy, fruitful, powerful. And he says next in verse 11, enduring.

In all endurance, in patience, with joy. So to pray for our friends, our church members, our spouses, to have endurance.

That is that they would keep going in impossible situations. When I look at it our congregation every week, I see people and my heart breaks for them because they're in impossible situations it seems like.

And I'm sure if I knew your stories better, many here have those kinds of stories where you're in some situation that just feels like I don't see the good of it. I don't see a way out of this. This isn't going to go away.

And Paul prays that they will endure with patience. And patience is more than just impossible situations. Patience is those impossible people in your life. Anybody have those?

[33 : 48] Anybody that person for someone else? You are that impossible person for somebody else. Paul prays that they will have endurance in impossible situations and patience with impossible people.

and then he prays for them to have that with joy. The old movie Gladiator, do you remember that? When he goes into the Colosseum and he fights. It's a great example of a Stoic.

A philosophy that says I can endure all things. Paul says, I'll take you Stoics for endurance and I'll raise you joy. Because the Stoics couldn't have joy.

They didn't have access to that. Paul says, let's endure but let's endure with joy. Because even in that hard thing, God's at work. Someone came up to me recently after I, like I mentioned, preached this the first time at my church and she's gone through an impossible situation with impossible people in her life and I know her story.

And she said to me, and it was beautiful because it was this sermon, she'd already lived it before I preached it. She said, as hard as all those things were, I would never wish them on myself or anybody else but I wouldn't trade them now for what God did.

[34 : 57] And she said it with a smile that doesn't minimize or cancel the pain but it says it was worth it because God was doing something beautiful in her life.

That's how she found the joy. And then he says in verse 12, he prays for them to be thankful and he spends more time on this than any part of the prayer. And this is where it will begin to wrap up.

He prays that they will be thankful in verse 12. When I studied this the first time I thought, went back and looked at my prayer cards, I said, I don't have one time when I'm praying for people to be thankful. Have you ever prayed for someone to be thankful?

And when I say it, I think, well, of course we should. How did I miss that? And maybe you've missed it too. Maybe you prayed all the time for people, then good on you. I missed it. I never thought to pray, God make me thankful.

God make someone else that I love thankful. What happens when you're thankful? Your eyes come up off yourself, off your problems, and they see the whole picture of what God is doing in the world.

[36 : 02] When you're thankful, it's a spiritual protection because so often we're tempted through our discontentment. But you know what can't live together? Gratefulness and discontentment.

And so to be delivered from discontentment is to be delivered from possible temptation. It's a spiritual insulator and protector to be thankful. But are you like me? And sometimes you want to be thankful.

You try to get that fire going, but it just doesn't seem to spark. Well, Paul here has some logs to throw on that fire in verses 12 through 14. To throw on that fire to increase our gratitude.

First, he says, to be thankful that we have been qualified to share in the inheritance. I love that word qualified. It doesn't show up often in the New Testament, but it goes against a way you and I often move through life feeling not qualified, but disqualified.

If there was a word to hang over your life, would it be disqualified? God, I feel disqualified to be your follower. I feel disqualified to be a good spouse, to be a good friend.

[37 : 06] I feel disqualified from being a good parent. I just feel, in general, disqualified. But God says, you're qualified. I have made you qualified to what?

Share in the inheritance. And Paul here picks up an Old Testament term and brings it forward. And this is why we read from the book of Exodus chapter 6 this morning because God there says, you're going to get an inheritance in the land.

For the Christian, it's not just the promised land. It's the whole thing. We're not just going to get one country. God's going to give us the new heavens and new earth.

We've been qualified to share in that inheritance. And when we're thankful for that, doesn't that change whatever hard thing it is that we're going through? Because it's temporary. It's not forever. And that increases our thanksgiving. The second log he gives us to throw on the fire is that he has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of the Son of God he loves.

[38 : 09] That's a word meaning he's taken us out of a country. A king has come in and conquered and taken those people out to a better country. That's what God has done for us. Meditate on that.

Pray about that. Sit down and think on it. Find a song and worship God for it and increase your thankfulness. Pray that others are thankful for that. And the third log is in verse 14.

To be thankful for the Son in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. That's true for your Christian friend and it's true for you. And redemption in the Bible is a beautiful concept not where the guilty pays the innocent but the innocent pays for the guilty.

And isn't that our salvation? The innocent pays for the guilty. A redemption, a ransom is another word that you could translate here. When you watch a movie about a ransom payment, how does it work?

You have to go and pay for the innocent to be set free. You have to pay the guilty for the innocent. But in the Bible, for your redemption, the innocent has paid for the guilty.

[39 : 17] So much so that we have been qualified to share in the inheritance and we have the forgiveness of sins he ends the paragraph with. Many of you probably listen to Dave Ramsey on the radio, the financial guru.

And every so often he has somebody call in who has gone through his plan and they are now debt free. And that's what Dave is all about, getting you debt free. Right? And they tell their story how hard it was to be under the weight of all that debt and all the things they went through and all the plans and all the sacrifices they made to now be debt free.

And how does it always end? With the debt free scream. And these people are so excited that they will scream on the radio in front of millions of people about being debt free.

But their debt is nothing compared to the debt that's been paid for you and it's been paid for me. When you hear that debt free scream remember I can scream too for a far greater debt has been paid where the innocent has paid for the guilty.

Pray that for those people you're concerned about that God would give them that gratitude as they go through whatever obstacle or trial in life that they will be grateful for God's grace in their lives.

[40 : 32] and any believer like we've seen can have this kind of impact across distance across barriers across ages generations it doesn't matter. The first thing Paul did was pray and it can be so for us as well.

Let's pray. Father we thank you for the truth that we've seen here this morning and Lord I just confess how much I need it. I've spent time in this passage over the last few months and I still see so much more that I want to grow in.

Father I pray that you would make us people who pray and I pray that you would make us people who pray like Paul and I pray that you would help us to see the fruit of our prayers and I pray that we would pray because we see the grace and forgiveness and compassion that we have from you in Jesus Christ.

We pray all these things in Jesus name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.