

Prayer for a New Year

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[0 : 00] All right, as I said before, please turn in your Bibles to the book of Colossians. Colossians chapter one. So you guys recovering okay?

Myrrh's kind of laying out, a little bit too much cake and food and sweets. I'm grateful this Christmas. I know it's been a special.

We've been able to host Daniela's family and I know it's not, not everybody's had that opportunity during this whole COVID pandemic and everything else attached to it. So there's these small things that we're grateful for that we're able to see, family and friends.

So I pray that we still take the time according to some of the guidelines the government's given to us. We're excited that, as I said, just on Christmas Eve, that they have, they understand or beginning to understand that church is essential and have not included us in some of the regular shutdowns.

I know just on Facebook, I've got several friends have stated that they have COVID in the house, but everything seems to be pretty mild and acting like a bit of a cold.

[1 : 12] So this morning, as we draw near to 22, 20, 22, I thought it'd be a good idea to address the subject of prayer. Obviously, there's a lot of things that can be said about prayer, but I just want to share with you some thoughts that the Apostle Paul gives us to on this subject.

Obviously, prayer has been on my heart the last couple of months, just dealing with my wife's physical, just her ailments and just the attacks that she's had.

As you know, her name's been on the prayer list many times these last couple of months, and obviously we're grateful, and I don't want to speak on her behalf, but I know from me, I'm really grateful for your prayers.

It's just strengthened us through, and I know my wife will share with you that those prayers is what she believes held her, kept her safe, and able to survive the surgery and just to go through the infection and all those other things.

I know we were humbled by the amount of people that reached out from all parts of the globe, just saying they were praying for us, even getting texts from certain friends saying, hey, in just different parts of the country, we heard through our prayer group that your wife's name came up.

[2 : 28] So we're very grateful for the saints who've joined us on behalf. So, been thinking a little bit about prayer, and I thought we'd be a good thing to go into God's Word a little bit more.

Obviously, there's a lot of questions surrounding the subject of prayer. I'm sure if you asked, we took a poll of every one of you in here, I'm sure one of the top issues that would come out is, I don't pray enough, right?

Even those that spend many, many hours in prayer, there's always this feeling that there's not enough time giving to our communication with our most heavenly Father. And I know that we are, we all know that there's people that we call prayer warriors.

Those are the people that we know that, you know, they're the ones that call you in the middle of the night. Hey, I'm thinking about you. What can I pray for you on, right? Or any time during the day. They're just the people that are constantly calling, reaching out, asking, what can they pray for you?

And they love doing so at every time. Then there's others of us that sometimes prayer is not a comfortable thing. We don't always think of it the first thing when we're talking to someone or whatever their situation is.

[3 : 39] But I think that there is a lot of questions that get asked. Questions such as, how should I pray and how often should I pray?

Why pray? If God is sovereign, why should I bother praying? Do my prayers actually make a difference? Some questions are, are there different types of prayers that I need to know at different times?

Can I pray for myself? Is it better to pray in the morning, at night? Are they supposed to be long, short, loud, silent? There's so many different questions that we can answer on the topic of prayer.

But this morning, I don't want to answer any of those questions. What I want to do is I want to call our attention that the two people that are significantly prominent in the Bible, Jesus Christ, and the writings of the Apostle Paul, they prayed.

And they prayed a lot. And I thought it'd be really interesting is if we could just kind of listen in to what Paul has to say to a group of saints that he's been praying for for a long time.

[4 : 49] And just see if there's any wisdom that we can draw from Paul's letter to them. And just to help us understand prayer a bit more.

So this morning, I want to focus on what are the natures of Paul's prayers? What is he praying for? And two, how did he pray?

What are some of the habits that he developed over time that he shared with the saints in his prayers? So I really believe by looking at these aspects of Paul's prayer, I think it will be a service to not only my prayer life, but yours as well.

So again, let's take a look at Colossians 1, 9 to 14. So this is this church. It's a church outside of Ephesus. And we understand through church history that there was this man named Epaphras, was in Ephesus at the time, and he heard Paul preach the gospel, got saved, brought the gospel back to this small town of Colossae, which actually doesn't even exist anymore.

It was wiped out, I believe, by a volcano, and they just didn't even bother building it back up. But this letter has continued through time, and it's a very precious letter. So during this time, Epaphras would go back to Paul with questions as the church was growing and they were maturing in the faith.

[6 : 11] Epaphras would share everything that's going on in their church, and Paul would respond. And this is one of the letters that we have that responded to them. So he's writing to this church in the city of Colossae.

So he says, 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 and all spiritual wisdom and understanding.

And the we he's referencing is Paul's in prison at this time. He's writing a letter to saints that are from prison, and he's got different people visiting him at different times.

Timothy, we know Mark. There was a bunch of different Christian saints that would come to encourage him, and he would get these guys in with him, praying as well for the different churches.

So it says, 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 the 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 and light.

[7 : 23] 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. So the first observation that I believe that we can make from Paul's prayer is that Paul's prayer life was extensive.

Paul's prayer life was extensive. Notice in verse 9, And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you.

As I said, Paul doesn't even know these saints. These are just people that his disciples are bringing to him. And he's laying out their concerns. And Paul, being a believer in Jesus Christ, is taking on their concerns as well.

And he's submitting them to the Lord. It says, Paul was willing to extend his prayer life beyond himself, beyond his family, and beyond his immediate friends.

Because those are the things we think about, right? When we pray, we pray for those things that are before our eyes. And often it's ourself, our family, and our friends. But what Paul is doing here, he's expanding those he can pray for.

[8 : 32] He's looking for opportunities to pray for saints who knows that have a need. And my friends, I can tell you, when we begin to pray for others, our world grows.

You know that? You will start to take on concerns and ideas of others as you've heard through their lives. I remember very distinctly, and I still remember this, I was young, I was in first year college, and one of my friends was sharing at our church, at our chapel time, that one of their family friends was a prisoner.

He was taken prisoner in Nepal. So he was a missionary over in Nepal, and he was in prison. I remember there was just something as a 19-year-old that just really struck me.

Like, wait a second, people are still going to prison today for the gospel. And I just kept praying for this guy years and years and years. And I never saw, I'm still in touch now with the guy who told me about it.

But at that time, I was completely removed from that world where I even heard this prayer. And I'm living in London, Ontario. I'm at the University of Western, and one of my friends says, hey, my dad's preaching at a church, and it wasn't my regular church, so it's a church way out in the bush.

[9 : 47] And who would you know shows up at this church? The guy who was the missionary who was in Nepal who's been freed now. This is like six years later.

So you cannot, I can't tell you how tearful and excited I was to go meet him. And here's these, like, why is this guy crying for me, right? I'm just this university student.

But I had been given just years of my life to praying for this guy. I knew his story of when it first down. And we just had this special bond of connection that was created.

And I first heard of him in California and had been praying all those years. And then I meet him in the backwoods of London, Ontario. What a powerful lesson that was for me. How many times we need to be able to expand and we need to expand.

And that's why I've been graciously seeing so many of the saints just praying for my wife from different parts of the world as friends of friends told others.

[10 : 47] So it expands us. It makes us care for people that we don't usually care for. So that's the first observation I think we can make clearly from Paul. When Paul heard of a need, he prayed.

The second observation is that we read that Paul prayed unceasingly. Notice verse 9. And so from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you.

Now I want you to understand, this doesn't mean he's always praying. Like every, you know, he's praying while he's eating, he's praying while he's talking, hang on, I gotta do, you know, all these different things. That's not what it means.

What the word unceasing means, he is committed to always praying for them. All right? It means it's not just a one-off prayer, it's a committed to multiple times.

That Paul has made it a point to regularly intercede for the saints on their behalf. What we learn here is that some things we should not stop praying for.

[11 : 46] Like sometimes there's moments, someone health, or there's a crisis, or something. In the moment, we want to pray, we want to hold that person up, but sometimes there's long-term things.

And sometimes the Lord is so gracious through the power of the Spirit, he just puts something on our heart. And we're going to continue non-stop prayer for. For some things, it's really easy.

Who struggles with patience? Right? So we're constantly find ourselves, Lord, I need you to help me grow in patience. I need you to help me grow in love, in courage, wisdom, understanding.

But there are certain things that we know that we're supposed to be praying for. I still continue to pray for my Father's salvation, and it's going on decades. Just constantly, we need to be going to the Lord, just praying and petitioning.

And sometimes, like I said, sometimes, the Lord lays something on your heart that you know you need to continue to pray for. And we need to submit ourselves to God by asking.

[12 : 48] So the first observation, I think, we see Paul, we expand the world, we pray for different things. And one, we see that we are to be unceasingly in our prayers.

And the third observation, Paul links his prayers to thanksgiving and prayers of petitions. And those prayers of petitions, what that means is things that he's asked for that he's seen realize he continues to give thanks for.

Look at verse 3. It says so clearly, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord, Jesus Christ, when we pray for you. See, because Paul understands and realizes that when he's submitting different people's lives to the Lord, we don't know what's going to happen.

Like, we know the joke, eh? Never pray for patience. Because you know God's going to stretch you. He's going to bring in those things that make you impatient in order to make you patient. And although we want to magically appear at that time, wow, I'm patient all of a sudden.

Doesn't usually happen that way. Usually there's trials of life or trials of people that cause us to, man, I got to submit myself, I got to submit myself, I got to submit myself.

[14 : 03] So, but there's this thankfulness that develops here. Paul thanks God for what he has asked for. And there's this presumptuousness to it.

And we're going to understand why in a little bit, why there's this presumptuousness. But, one of the things that we tend to do is we tend to be drawn to prayer when things aren't going the way we want them to.

Right? That's life. When things are working the way we want them to, we rely on our own strength. We think it's us. But when a curveball or something comes outside of our control, health, illness, financial issues, moral failure, sometimes we're faced with a difficult decision or there's tension in our family, we tend to want to pray more.

But Paul, we see, has this attitude of always being thankful for all the things that he's bringing to God. And these are the things I believe that we are to be driven to pray for.

He prays prayers of thanks for God's grace and God's mercy. When Paul learns of what great things God is doing in this church, he continues to give thanks.

[15 : 31] And obviously the question is, are we more constrained to pray when our church is struggling or when we're being blessed? When our families are struggling or when our families are being blessed?

Are we eager to pray for our children when they are making great progress in their faith? Or when they just start hanging around with the wrong friends, do we start paying attention to these things?

So I think there's three observations that we can make here. One, as I've said, prayer's Paul life was extensive. It wasn't just for his family, his self, and his friends. We see that prayer, Paul's prayer life was unceasing.

He made it a point of his life to continue praying for others. And the third observation we can make is that Paul's prayers were just as much as requests, petitions, but mostly thanksgiving.

So, those are the things that we can observe. Now, I want to take a look at specifically what are some of the things that Paul prayed for that can be a lesson for us on what we should pray for.

[16 : 43] So let's take a look at verse 9. And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you. Asking, and he's telling us exactly what he's praying for, right?

Asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding. Boom, that's big.

That is a massive thing that he's praying for. Knowledge of God's will. Usually when we think of God's will, we think of it in respect to what is God's will for my life, right?

For 46 years, I asked, was, I wanted to be married. I prayed for a long time. But there became a shift before I got married. Man, God, maybe, maybe it's not your will that I be married, right?

I started a shift. My will was to be married. Then I had to do this shift of, oh, maybe that's not your will. Can I change your will, God? Because I want my will, right?

[17 : 49] But those are the things that we sometimes need to think about. Is this my will that I'm praying for? Is this God's will? And we're going to get to a point here in a bit on how we determine what is God's will.

Psalms 143, verse 10, King David writes, teach me to do your will for you are my God.

If we are serving, we are following Jesus Christ, it should be important to us what God's will is. It's not a question of asking God to help me figure out my will, but it's a prayer, a plea asking God to help me to do His will.

You see, doing God's will is obeying God. The fact of the matter is God has already made His will known. Our responsibility as followers in Christ is to do it.

Too often, I find God's people struggling, trying to figure out God's unrevealed will when they're not doing God's revealed will.

[19 : 04] Do you understand what I'm saying? Sometimes we're looking for the mystery of what is God's will so we can do it right, but there's some things God has made so clear in our life that we're not even doing that.

So the obvious question is, why would God reveal to you His unrevealed will when you can't even bother to do His revealed will? Right?

That needs to be a check in our hearts. What's going on? What are my priorities? And I'm often, I find myself confused with Christians asking me about God's will when it even comes to the subject of sin.

God's will is that you repent, that you be sanctified, to be made holy. So that means you need to turn your back on that sin, not to help you with the struggle of temptation.

The Bible already teaches you to flee from temptation. It's not to give you strength in that temptation, it's to run away, run away, run away.

[20 : 08] We are reminded of Paul's words on the subject of sin in Romans 12 too. He says, do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

You see, the renewing of our minds is what leads us to determining what God's will is. the book of Ephesians that we believe that Paul wrote at the same time from prison to the church in Ephesus.

He says, look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise, but as wise, making the best use of the time because the days are evil.

Therefore, do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. See, there's this contrast that Paul is giving to us.

God's will, wisdom, our will, foolishness, right? And this is something that we need to understand and truly believe. When we seek God's will, we are seeking wisdom.

[21 : 27] And notice, it's not just knowledge of knowing what is right, it's the wisdom component of doing what is right. You with me on that?

It's not just knowing what to do, but actually doing what needs to be done. Let me ask you a question. If you guys needed financial advice, would you go to an accountant who was bankrupt?

No, right? Even though he might know all the financial means of planning, but if he can't put them into regular working, life, why would you go to that person?

You actually want to go to someone who actually doesn't know something, but he actually believes what he knows, and he follows it. So when it says to, in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, these are the things we need to pursue.

some people may have the information, but not everybody puts that information into practice. The reality is we need God's wisdom and knowledge to make our way in this world, and may I argue most strenuously, probably now than at any other time.

[22 : 49] The church is beset by all sorts of lies that are going on in this world today, even about the sexuality question that's coming up, the sexual moral ethics.

This world is upside down and inside itself, and dare I say completely insane, in understanding what is truth and error. Right now, even the questioning of math.

Right? Like, the whole idea that truth can be subjective is such a lie. So the reality is how can we honestly think Christianly and genuinely bring our minds and hearts and conduct into conformity with God's will simply by remembering our Sunday school lessons?

See, the fact of the matter is, if you need to know what God has to say, you need to study what God has to say. That means you need to be a study of God's word. You need to submit yourself to clear biblical teaching.

You need to be disciplined. You need to come under someone who can explain the truth of God's word for you. You see, as Christians, we are to make our lives about knowing what Jesus Christ taught us, what he teaches us through God's word, to study what the Bible has to say about these things.

[24 : 17] In fact, as you start to study it, one of the things that we addressed in our men's group this past year is the Bible actually has a lot to say about marriage, sexuality, finances, raising children, how to deal with conflict.

These are all the things that are common to every man that walks on this earth. And to ignore God's wisdom is a recipe for foolishness.

And this is why Paul prays so earnestly for these truths to be in the lives of the saints of the church of Colossae.

So that is the first thing that he says. The second thing that we can observe is that Paul asks that their lives might be pleasing to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And of course, this follows the first point. If you're not doing what God's called you to do, how can you do what is pleasing to God? Let's take a look at verse 10. So as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him.

[25 : 30] Let me ask you a question. Who wants to live a life pleasing to God? Right? That should be the overwhelming burden of our existence.

If you truly know and believe that God is who he is and that he sent his son Jesus Christ to die on the cross for you and you believe and you put your faith and he becomes Lord of your life, you want to live a life that is pleasing to him.

Who here, and you children, maybe I shouldn't ask this question aloud, wants to honor your parents by living a life pleasing to your parents? Right?

You do want to honor your parents. If they've raised you in the word and they love you, you want to honor them. It's the same way. Paul's desires for the saints is that they would live a life worthy of the Lord.

How often we get caught up with wanting to live the life that we want. Now, and I believe this teaching is of particular concern to our generation but as well our culture.

[26 : 42] You guys know I've talked about this. We are an individualistic culture. The greatest right is with the individual as opposed to the group. And at the time that Paul's writing this, you protected the group.

And if you weren't protecting your group, there'd be a bit of a shame culture. I honestly believe with some of the crazy idiotic things we're seeing today that we need to develop a bit of a shame culture.

Right? That, man, you can't be doing that. You can't be saying those things. And as I think it was, I'm trying to think of who made the comment. Oh, it was Mike Tyson the boxer. And he said this great word of wisdom.

He said, Twitter is the place where people say stupid things when they can't be in front of you because if they were, I'd punch you in the tooth. Right? Punch you in the mouth.

Right? Because they do. And people air out all sorts of horrible, wretched things that there's no way they would say that in a crowd of friends. How could you say that about someone? And even Christians are guilty of that stuff.

[27 : 50] Right? There's a position we don't like and we demonize it or we create a straw man. So there's this attitude that we need that Paul, we see, is asking that their lives might be pleasing to the Lord.

We need to start asking questions. What would Jesus have me do? How would he have me speak? How would he have me conduct myself? Is there certain context of life I need to avoid because if someone saw me in that, it would bring shame and reproach on the name of Jesus?

So, first thing is to understand what God's will is. The second element that we see is that we have this idea of living a life that is pleasing to the Lord.

And this isn't a big thing right now, but a couple years it was and it might still be around today. I don't know if many of you guys have bought many books on prayer, but a lot of them are about the contemplative prayer movement.

And let me just give you a warning about that. So, guys that supported that, Rick Warren, there was a man by Richard Foster, and actually Eugene Peterson wrote quite a lot.

[29 : 09] And what they did is they believed that you could get in touch with God's truth if he spoke to you. And basically it was almost this form of meditation where you were meditating, waiting for this truth to come inside you and that must be the way of connecting.

with God. That's actually antithetical to what the Bible actually teaches. This is the place where God has revealed his word. Now, there's certain decisions, right?

Comes in, do I marry the blonde or the brunette? Right? Like, do I go to UBC or do I go to University of Victoria? There's certain things you might need to think about. But that's not what they're advocating.

They're almost waiting for this new truth that God can bring you and that is called this contemplating prayer. That is actually not what biblical prayer looks like. Biblical prayer is about informed prayer, informed on God's truth.

So here's the other thing that I want to ask you. When it says Paul asked their lives might be pleasing to the Lord, what does pleasing to the Lord look like? And I'm going to give you three quick points to this.

[30 : 15] One, to bear fruit in every good work. So if you want to live life pleasing to God, bear fruit. That means God has given you as a believer in Jesus Christ spiritual fruits.

And you're supposed to use those fruits in conjunction with the church for the forwarding of God's kingdom. Amen? That's what we're called to do. We're not called to use those gifts elsewhere.

This is the place where we're actually called to use those gifts and let it spread out. The fact of the matter is God's priorities should be our priorities. If church is a big deal to Jesus, it should be a big deal to us.

Too often I meet people espousing the idea, well, Jesus is my own personal savior. I can live my own personal life. Ah, that's actually not what the Bible teaches. Yes, he saves you, but Christ died for the church, the group, the body of believers that were to come together, use their gifts, support, love, encourage with one another, be disciple, disciple others.

So one, bearing good fruit and good work. The other life that is pleasing to God is growing in the knowledge of God. John 7, 17 says, if anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.

[31 : 27] So what he's saying is you need to know your will if it equates with God's will or if you hear someone speaking. The other third, the third way that we can live a life that is pleasing to God is to pursue holiness, right?

Is to pursue a sanctified life. And I want to just make a comment on here. Sometimes people get discouraged with the idea of holiness is because they believe that word holy means to be perfect.

Okay, first of all, we need to understand that only God is perfect. Amen? He's the only one. Now what God is calling us to is to be separate unto him to live a life that glorifies him.

The reason I say this is I know some Christians are so discouraged by the sin in their life. Listen, we all have sin and we all need to deal with it honestly and openly before the Lord.

But it's never supposed to shoot us in the foot or the head where we can't function as believers. There's a point of giving those things. And as we grow in our strength and in knowledge of the Lord, the Lord brings other issues in our life that we need to give to him to seek repentance.

[32 : 39] But I know some people kind of go on a sin hunt in their own lives. They want to be holy so they start asking people, you know, what, you find, am I a little impatient with you?

Not understanding what do I need to ask your forgiveness of? Like they almost go into this point of despair because let's be honest, if God were to reveal all our sins to us at once, it would probably be the most discouraging, despairing moment of our lives.

But God in his grace and mercy sometimes only reveals little bits and pieces to us because he knows what we can handle. And I believe as we honestly do that, we honestly submit ourselves to God to be sanctified.

And by that way, it's we're allowing God's, the power of the Holy Spirit to work in our lives and to grow. So the fact of the matter is, and I was just talking to a friend, you can have a, um, and I'm going to use the example that Chris shared with me and I think Chris won't mind.

And he was talking about Bronson, his son, and his, Bronson's turning into a pretty good mountain biker, right? And, and, and Chris made this observation. When I give, he says, when I give Bronson my nine-year-old instructions on mountain biking, he does it perfectly.

[34 : 05] Like he's knowing the lines and all that mountain bike mumbo jumbo that you guys are into, right? I just know pedal and brake. But anyway, he's, you know, he sits there talking and his kid, Bronson understands it.

But then the, the command to clean your room, you know, he's got no concept of, right? And he just kind of made the comment of, I'm treating him like a man because he's kind of riding older than he is, but I have to realize he's still nine years old.

And it's the same thing when we interact with other believers in Christ. We have to know where they are spiritually. And for Bronson to be a man, it's going to be another nine years till he gets to 18 years old, right?

And how long is nine years? It's nine years. And for someone, when they look at someone, I want to be as mature as that spiritual person over there, they think if they go to Bible study every single day of every single week for the next year, they're going to gain 18 years of wisdom.

It doesn't happen that way. And it's God's grace that it doesn't happen that way. Because we're supposed to take the lessons and live them out and we grow in those ways.

[35 : 18] That's why we see the word walk, walk, walk. It takes a while to get that distance. And sometimes I see Christians rushing to get to the end, to be mature.

That's not the way it happens. They have to grow and use their gifts and all those things that God's given them in that moment. Yes, keep learning, keep growing, but also using those things in a practical way.

Does that make sense? That's a little bit of a sidebar that I've been running into. People wanting to mature quicker than they are trying to be more holy. We have a saying with preachers that sometimes preachers are preaching above their holiness.

They're talking about such deep theological concepts that they haven't actually lived them out in their life. So the third thing that I want us to look at, what does Paul pray for?

It says, Paul asked that the saints would be strengthened to display endurance and patience. And this goes along with what I just said, verse 11. May you be strengthened with all power according to his glorious might for all endurance and patience with joy.

[36 : 30] You see, the fact of the matter is we need stamina. The Christian life is not a sprint. Hebrews 12 makes this quite clear to us. The Christian life is a marathon.

And you get better over time. You can run that first mile as fast as you can, but it's not going to help you if you can't run the other 25 miles, right?

Anybody else run high school track and field? We used to always laugh. The 400 meter dash, I know Ray has, Rachel has. The 400 meter was always the killer. The guy who could really sprint the 100, 200 meters, you'd get them into a 400 meters and you'd say, I can do this without running.

And then he'd hit a wall at about 300 meters. His body just wasn't trained to go that extra 100 meters and everybody would catch up to him, even though he would start off in the lead.

It's the same thing with the Christian life. Don't be frustrated that you're not perfectly mature. Allow yourself to accept what God has brought into your life and to mature you in the way that God means to mature you.

[37 : 39] Because as the Christian life is a marathon, you need stamina and there's always going to be conflict and persecution that you will have to endure in order to grow.

So don't go looking for more than you can handle. And the last point that Paul does is he's actively giving thanks to the Father.

Thanking God. Verse 12. Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints and light.

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.

Here's a quiz. Who delivered him? Jesus Christ, right? Did Paul say in here that through their hard work, through their verse memorization, through their obedience to the parents, along with what God did, got him transferred to the kingdom?

[38 : 53] No. Jesus Christ is the one who does all the work. And you know what that should do to us? Humble us. You see, to be a thankful Christian is a humble Christian.

It's to know and understand that the power power doesn't exist in me. The power is in Jesus Christ, my Savior and Lord and God.

Amen? Once we know that he's got it, we should have a confidence that he's going to see it through. You see, this salvation thing, it's all God.

What Paul is saying is that to love a life worthy of Jesus Christ is to overflow with joyful thanksgiving in the light of salvation we have received solely because of him.

My friends, there's many ways for us to pray. From a practical standpoint, I can give you really no advice. All I know is when people ask me for practical ways to pray, I usually ask them, well, what kind of person are you?

[40 : 10] Are you more alert in the morning or at night? Or maybe in the afternoon? Some people make lists. Here's the thing I'm going to tell you about a struggle that I have in my marriage.

My wife tells me to make lists. But if you know me, I've got to make a list to tell me to look at my list. Right? It's just, it's not going to happen.

I've got to set up different ways to get my mind to do it. So one of the things that I do is when someone gives me a prayer request, I want to pray right then, right there. I know there's other moments when I'm in my study, I just push everything away and I just think about some of the things that I need to be praying about because there's certain things that always need to be praying about.

But when you guys come to mind, what do I do? I pray in that moment. I give thanks for you. I give thanks for the gifts that are going on. If I know there's a struggle going on in your life, I pray for that in that moment.

Now there's certain things, if you look at my computer, I put names on the computer. So I know to keep that person at the foremost top of my thoughts because they're going through an ordeal at that moment.

[41 : 16] So there's different ways. I know some people, they're really great at journaling and writing down all those great and wonderful things. But one of the things I often do is I just ask God to help me.

Who needs prayer? And I still do this once in a while. I don't know if you guys remember. Remember Facebook when it first started would always put like five people on the sidebar of your friends list.

I don't know if you remember that. But they used to just put five people there. And that actually used to be my prayer list. It was kind of a randomization of all my friends because it's so easy to forget about all the different people in my life.

But I used to use that. But sometimes I use other means. If it shows up in my feed, let me just pray for that brother or sister in Christ. Just even the other day I was talking about, I was learning about airplanes and one of my friends is a pilot.

And just sure enough I'm praying for him and guess who reached out the very next day? Who knew? Right? God is good. So my friends, I really believe that a heart committed to a life of prayer is a heart that is submitted to God.

[42 : 21] Just as I believe that a heart that is submitted to God is a heart submitted and committed to prayer. Let's pray. Dear Lord, Heavenly Father, I just, I pray that we're able to learn some truths about how to live this life according to you just as we kind of read in on this wonderful letter that you write our brothers and sisters who lived over 2,000 years ago and the questions that they had and just how Paul wonderfully loves them by instructing them to pray just by sharing how he prays.

Father, we know as we go through the Gospels how many times we read that Jesus Christ took the time to pray to you, carving time into the most complicated and toilsome days, he made it a priority.

The one truth I know above all else, prayer is to be a priority. That we are to continually be communicating with you. Father, I just pray as this congregation comes together and I know just through COVID it's been hard to have prayer meetings and whatnot and growth groups aren't functioning the way they used to be.

I pray that we'd be making that extra effort to demonstrate our faithfulness by even letting people know about what we need prayer for.

That we would be thinking about people and caring for their souls in the most tender of ways by praying for them. Father, you can do much through prayer and I've lived through the power of prayer.

[44 : 00] My whole life is dedicated to people who've prayed for me. I pray that someone would be able to say that about us. That we've held them up through difficult times.

Whether it was struggle in sin or struggle in life. Maybe the world came nipping at the door for a different job that in God's mercy he would know was not good for someone's soul and just the saints that are lifting that person up.

Gives them the wisdom to say no even though it looks so good. Father, it's impossible to list all the areas we need prayer for. But it's not impossible to know that we need to pray to you for one another.

So we thank you for the gift of prayer. The gift that it opens up love, care and concern for one another. That others' burdens become our burdens.

We take them on with joy, with gladness and with thanksgiving. So Father, as we head into this new year, I pray that perhaps for maybe it's one or two or many would take an honest look at their prayer life and make a decision that certain priorities need to change in order to be like Paul, to pray for all the saints.

[45 : 33] We ask these things in your most gracious and glorious name. Amen. Amen.