



## BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of S. Lewis Johnson

Colossians 1:9-14

"From Knowledge to Life Through Christ"

TRANSCRIPT

[Message] We're turning for our Scripture reading to Colossians chapter 1, verse 9 through verse 14. This is the third in our series of studies in the exposition of Colossians, and today we are looking at Paul's prayer for the Colossians. And ultimately, of course, his prayer and the Lord's desire for each of us, Colossians 1, verse 9 through 14. For those of you who were not here in our previous studies, we devoted one of our mornings to the salutation, the first two verses, with something of the background of this epistle, the problems in Colossae relating to a form of Gnostic Judaism, a kind of heresy of a mixture of Judaism and some pagan elements. Paul will deal with that in the Epistle to the Colossians, and he will seek to show that the solution to false doctrine and in almost every case is a fuller knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And then last week, we looked at his thanksgiving of them for their faith, for their love, on account of the hope which is laid up for them in heaven. And now in verse 9, the apostle continues with his prayer for them.

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in

every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God; Strengthened with all might, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness; Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light."

That word, "Made us meet" is a word that we could translate by "has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," or "has made us fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light." We hope to say something about that later on. Paul continues and concludes with. "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son: In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:"

Now before I close, may I just make one comment concerning the expression in verse 14, "Through his blood"? Those of you that have a modern translation probably do not have that phrase here. You probably have something like, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." And that probably is what the apostle wrote to the Colossians. But some of the earlier manuscripts or some of the manuscripts of the Epistle to the Colossians have the expression, "Redemption through his blood." Now sometimes, we are forced to make a decision with regard to the thought of a particular passage if we have doubt about the genuineness of the reading. Fortunately, in this case, while it is unlikely that Paul wrote to the Colossians, "We have redemption through his blood," he probably wrote, by the sounds of text or criticism, he probably wrote simply, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins." But in Ephesians chapter 1, which so often parallels the Epistle to the Colossians, they both were prison epistles of Paul. There Paul writes, "In whom we have redemption through his blood." So in this case, we have theological justification to say, "Redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins," even though in this case, the text here probably, as Paul wrote it, does not have anything but, "In whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins." There is an occasion,

from time to time, for us to use our heads with our knowledge, and I think this is a case where we should do that.

May the Lord bless this reading of his word. Let's bow together in a moment of prayer.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, we come to Thee through the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. We thank Thee that he is the head of the church, the first born from the dead. We praise Thee and thank Thee that in all things, Thou hast brought it to pass that he has the preeminence, the preeminence in the creation about us, the preeminence in the new creation of the church of Jesus Christ, and therefore preeminent in all things. We give Thee thanks and praise for the revelation of the greatness and majesty of the Son of God. And Father, we thank Thee for the privilege of proclaiming his name. And we thank Thee for the privilege of proclaiming that in him we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins. We rejoice in this and rejoice in the sense of security and assurance that is brought to us when we realize that the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation of our relationship with Thee. We pray Lord, Thy blessing upon the whole body of Jesus Christ.

And we thank Thee, Lord, for the United States of America, and we pray for our president and those associated with him in government. We ask that Thou will give them wisdom and guidance in these very critical days in which they must govern and in which we must live. We pray for the safety and security of the citizens of this country as they travel. We ask Lord that it may be granted to us to have freedom to proclaim the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ through the radio, over the television screens, in written ministry, in various forms, and in personal conversation. We are certainly blessed to live in this great land, and we thank Thee Lord.

We thank Thee, too, for the chapel and its ministry, its elders, its deacons, the tape ministry, and the radio ministry, and the written ministry, and we are especially grateful

today for the many who labor without any other reward than the sense of service of Thee in making it possible for so many people all over the face of this earth, surprisingly, but truly, to Thy names glory, to listen to the word of God, to have the word of God in their hands and help in understanding its message and meaning. We give Thee thanks for all of our workers and we pray, Lord, Thy blessing upon them and upon their families. We thank Thee for our elders and deacons, and for the members and friends, and especially we give Thee thanks for the visitors who are with us today in this meeting. May spiritual blessing be theirs.

And Lord, we would not forget by any means those who are suffering who have difficulties and trials and troubles, and some who are bereaved. We pray for them. We ask Lord that Thou wilt be with them and encourage them and give healing in accordance with Thy will.

We thank Thee for the privilege of the ministry of the word of God and now as we sing, and as we listen to the word, may we have the sense of Thy presence with us to the glory of Christ our Lord and Savior, in whose name we pray. Amen.

[Message] Some of our familiar hymns have a great deal of gospel in them, and some of our familiar hymns do not have a whole lot. And I'm not sure I didn't have time to look at it from the standpoint of Christian theology as we were singing it. In fact I was, at one point, singing the third verse while Mr. Prier was singing the second [Laughter] and so, that unnerved me a little bit, and I heard his voice for the first time. He has a pretty good voice. Usually I try to drown it out, so, I don't hear him. But this time I was a little embarrassed, but I didn't have time to research that hymn. It's a nice hymn. We're all familiar with it. We do sing it from time to time in the chapel, but I'm just not sure how much good, sound Christian theology is found in it. Perhaps we ought to take a further look at it.

We are continuing our exposition of the Epistle to the Colossians, and we are looking at Paul's prayer for them. As we mentioned last week, Paul customarily began his epistles with a prayer for the recipients of them, the only exception being the epistle to the Galatians when, apparently, he was so upset over the gospel of the grace of God that he omitted to give thanks for them. But he gives thanks for the Colossians. And our subject today as we look at it is, "From Knowledge to Life Through Christ."

Fundamental to all spiritual life is the content of this prayer, which is discernment of God's will and the power to perform it. And there is an answer here to common questions that all of us who are believers in Christ often ask. For what shall I pray? How shall I perform his will if I have the assurance that I know his will? Well, Paul's answer in this prayer is brief and to the point. He doesn't pray in lengthy fashion as we so often do.

I remember Billy Nicholson, the Irish evangelist who was so popular around the turn of the century, and so gifted in evangelization in the fields, one day called upon a man in the audience to pray. This individual was a man who whenever he was called upon to pray in public mentioned in his prayer every missionary that he knew in every land in which they were attempting to reach people for Christ. But this time, Mr. Nicholson called upon this brother and he said, "Brother so and so, would you lead us in prayer," it was a large public meeting, "Would you lead us in prayer and please keep it in County Donegal?"

Well Paul's prayers were always kept in "County Donegal" in the sense that they are, relatively speaking, brief prayers. They are filled with significant information. They are still to the point. Notice the link between thanksgiving and this prayer, because it's very close. In fact, if you read the thanksgiving that just preceded this and then you read the prayer that follows, you would be, I think, amazed to discover how many expressions reoccur. There are about six or eight of them. We don't have time to talk about them, but I suggest that you read it with that in mind. We do have, for example, verse 3, "We give thanks to God," and then in verse 12, "Giving thanks unto the Father." Incidentally,

it's, "We give thanks to God and the Father," in verse 3. We have other expressions, such as verse 4 says, "Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus," and then in verse 9, in the prayer, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it." So the apostle is using some language that is suitable for thanksgiving, but also suitable for prayer.

One of the things that I think is striking about this is that he has thanked God in the preceding thanksgiving for the faith of the Colossians, "In Christ Jesus," notice the 4th verse, and he has thanked God for, "The love that they have to all the saints," and then in the 5th verse, "on account of the hope that is laid up for them in heaven." So he has thanked God for their faith, for their love, and for their hope. There are many people, particularly in 1986, in evangelical circles who would think and be willing almost to say by the way in which they treat the word of God that if a believing Christian has love, that is the end of the Christian life.

Now the Colossians had faith. They had love on account of the hope that was laid before them. In other words, this marvelous Christian triad of faith, love and hope was theirs in their experience. And yet, Paul says they still need to grow. So we learn from this the very simple lesson that there is more to the Christian life than faith, love and hope. Now if we could just get that one lesson, then we could say the benediction and leave, but for those of you who are hoping that I would do that, I assure you, I'm not going to do that, but nevertheless, that's a very important lesson for us to learn, that faith, hope, and love are marvelous things to be seen in Christian, but the Christian life encompasses far more than faith, hope and love. Knowledge is crucial to Christian living.

The apostle was no apostle of complacency to start with. He never gave the impression, and wanted to give the impression, that there was a period in our lives in which we could say, "We have attained." The closest that he comes to that is in the Philippians' letter, just preceding this one, in which he says, among other things, "Let us therefore as many as be perfect or mature be thus minded." But then he goes on to say that, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God and Christ Jesus,"

and lets the Philippians know that while he regards himself as a mature Christian, he still has much spiritual land to possess. I think that's the right attitude for us all to have.

In this prayer, Paul uses the figure of a tree, and the figure of a growing tree. That's a very common figure. I think most of us can understand that. If you have trees in your yard, well, you have personal experience with trees. Some of us have trees and problems with trees, like trees that drop acorns and little trees grow up everywhere. I think that Paul is thinking about a tree that is a fruitful tree, one that has a growing influence, for he's likening the Christian life to that. There is a tree that grows in Hawaii and out in the east that I'm not sure that I have ever really examined. I think I probably have seen it. It's a banyan tree. Many of you know it because you have traveled to Hawaii. It has a peculiar characteristic. Perhaps there are other trees that have this characteristic too. But his one has the characteristic of growing up, its branches fall down touch the ground and where they touch the ground, it roots again. And so the banyan tree is a constantly moving tree. That's the kind of figure that I suppose the apostle must have had in mind when he likens the Christian life here to a tree with root and with trunk and with branches and nevertheless with a wide spreading influence which, in several places here in the first chapter, he says, "Touches the whole of the world that he knew."

So let's look at verse 9 where we have the root. The apostle writes, "For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." The root of this figure of the tree is knowledge. The heretics, obviously, had been offering the Colossians something that they said Paul had not offered them through Epaphras, who was Paul's evangelist. Epaphras, no doubt, was a person who had a somewhat limited understanding of the word of God. He was a convert of the Apostle Paul, but he had gone back to Colosse and he was responsible, so far as we know, for the existence of the Colossian church.

So we would assume that he had sufficient knowledge of the Pauline Doctrine to be a very effective evangelist of the word of God. But when the false teachers came in and began to say to the Colossian believers who were, after all, just at this point, at least, so far as we know, relatively untaught in the great doctrines of the faith, that there was something more than the simple teaching that Epaphras had given them and that they were prepared to give it to them, it was natural that they would listen. That often is the case. That's why so many who probably are genuine Christians or at least think they are and have been brought up in Christian circles, lend an ear to false doctrines today. They think that perhaps there is something here that they may have missed, and that's the way in which false doctrine is ordinarily presented. Follow our teaching and your life will become fuller and more significant, and you will know the things that will make you a much better Christian.

This is the kind of thing that most of the false cults do. They approach Christians with something else, something more, something fuller. In fact, they're almost always parasitical groups. Were it not for Christianity, they would not exist at all. And the vast number of false heresies and heretical groups, they would not exist at all if the real thing did not exist. It's upon the real thing that they build their false teaching. So these individuals, who were pagan in certain ways and who had imbibed certain practices and beliefs of Judaism falsely understood, mixed them together in what scholars have called Gnostic Judaism, came to these simple Christians and said, "We want to introduce you to a fullness in the Christian life."

That's why most students of Colossians believe the apostle talks so much about fullness in this little short epistle. That's why he says, in chapter 2 verse 9 and verse 10, "For in him," that is in Christ, "dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in him," using the same root word. He's trying to say to them, "You don't need these false teachers." So the apostle then will build on this and he says, "They have been offering you a kind of fullness, but the true fullness lies in the doctrine of Christ, and in



the knowledge of God's will." So he prays that they might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding.

Now for Paul, those who thought they had attained, have not really attained, and Paul rejects all human inventions and speculations as foreign to the word of God. For Paul, truth lies in the Scriptures. Now we're not saying that there is no truth out of the Bible. We're talking about spiritual truth, and we're talking also about this, that all truth, no matter what it may be, ultimately, is related to the truth of God set forth preeminently in the word of God. That means that, ultimately, when we get to heaven we will see physical truth, or psychological truth, or philosophical truth or arithmetical truth, or whatever, will, ultimately, find its relationship, proper relationship, to the great truths of the word of God.

Now, for Paul then, he prays that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding." Seems strange to some people that Paul should pray that they would be filled because doesn't he say, as in chapter 2, that they are already filled? So, how can he pray that they should be filled when he says also, they have been filled and are full? Well, that requires just a little bit of knowledge of the New Testament. It's a natural question. The reason that Paul can do this is simply that he may speak, at times of truth that is positional for us and then at other times of truth that has to do with our daily practice of the Christian life.

So far as our position is concerned, we are in our substitute, our covenantal head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and therefore we stand before God in Christ, and we stand in his merits. That's why a believing Christian can say, "I know that I am a Christian, and I know that I have the forgiveness of sins, for Christ is the ground upon which I stand, his person and his work. He's my representative. He has borne my judgment and penalty," and as a result of that, God on the basis of the merits of Christ, as granted to us represented by him forgiveness of sins, righteousness, justification of life, adoption into the family of God, the forgiveness of sins, priesthood, all the blessings that belong to

those who are in Christ. But now we are still in the flesh, and so the Bible is filled with ammunition and instruction about how we are to live in order that our lives may day by day, month by month, year by year become more conformable to what we are in Christ in our position. That's how Paul can say we've been filled full, and at the same time pray that they "might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding."

Scholars like to talk of some of that as realized eschatology. I don't like to use that term because I think that's confusing. But nevertheless, I think in this case, it's very true. The future has been realized for believers in the sense that they have the acceptance now that they will have in the future when they enter the presence of the Lord. That's a marvelous thing, isn't it? It's marvelous to know that we stand in Christ and that he and his position is the measure of us and our position in Christ. That's why we talk of things in the Bible as the gospel. That's good news for sinners. Now it's not good news for self-righteous people because they don't need it. But that's good news for sinners, and that's what the word of God, through Paul, presents.

Now one other thing, the knowledge of his will, one might ask the question, "What is his will?" And so we have to define the term will. That's used in different ways, as you know. If we are thinking about the decretive will of God, that is God in his marvelous wisdom has determined all things that are going to come to pass, past, present and future. Paul says that in Ephesians 1 verse 11 plainly. "He works all things according to the council of his will." So the decretive will of God has to do with that decree of our sovereign God who controls all the circumstances of all life in his world.

Now if Paul should mean that we should be filled with the knowledge of his decretive will, then I would have to say, "Well Paul you have given us marvelous truth, but you have gone astray on this point." Of course, I couldn't say that, but I know that the apostle would never say this, but if that's the way you understand it, then that's what you would have to say. We cannot know the decretive will of God. As a matter of fact,

when we get to heaven, we still will not know the decretive will of God, for life continues in heaven. And we will never hear the Lord Jesus Christ with whom we shall have marvelous communion and fellowship say, "Well, something happened yesterday that was a total surprise to me. I never thought that John, or Lewis, or whoever, would do this." That will never happen because the triune God is in control of all the circumstances of life and being omniscient, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit never grow in knowledge.

So in the future we will not know the decretive will of God, but the perceptive will of God. That is what the Scriptures say is well pleasing to the Lord, the things that are his will in that sense. Those are the things that Paul is praying about. He's praying that we might be filled with the knowledge of his perceptive will. That is, that we might come to understand what the Scriptures say about the things that please God. These are the things that we can know as we study the word of God. I said, "You know we can never know his decretive will, we can know his decretive will after the events come to pass." For example, we can know that it was his decretive will that the Los Angeles Rams defeat the Dallas Cowboys in the playoffs, in the last playoff season. As a matter of fact, I was in Europe at the time, I think the score was twenty-one to nothing, that was the decreed score as well, and however it came to pass that too was decreed, but we learned that after the fact. We do not learn it before the fact. Here, we're talking about his perceptive will.

Now this is something that they have positionally in Christ, for they have the mind of Christ, but Paul wants them to enter into an appreciation of and understanding of his perceptive will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding, because that's essential for Christian living. Notice two important points: the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Would you be inclined to say--let me ask you this question--would you be inclined to say, "Well that's what the Reverend Dr. So and so has, or my Christian friend, whose been a Christian for twenty-five years and has taught and studied the Bible for twenty-five years, that's their province. That's the province of unusual

people who write books about the Bible or preach the word of God, but for me, an ordinary person, Paul surely doesn't have me in mind, and pray that I might be filled with the knowledge of his will and all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That could never be my experience." Is that the way you feel? I think many people do feel that way. When they come to something like this, they would say, "Well that's for the elders, that's for Mr. Prier, or Dr. Howard, or Dr. Mims, or some person who teaches the Scriptures, here in Believers Chapel, or other teachers that you listen to over the radio, or whatever." So you think of that as something beyond you.

Now let me ask you a second question. Do you think it's God's will that you should walk, in your daily life, worthily of the Lord? Why every one of you, as a believing Christian, would say, "Why yes. I think that it's the Lord's will that I should walk worthily of the Lord." Well, do you see what is necessary to bring that to pass? To walk worthily of the Lord is for every believer, isn't it? To walk worthily of the Lord, are some of us to walk worthily of the Lord and others not? No that's ridiculous. We all are to walk worthily of the Lord, but Paul says, "I pray that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." So it's obvious that since the result, or the purpose, depending upon how we analyze that phrase, it's not too important since its divine truth, but since the purpose or the result touches every one of us, it's obvious that the means touches every one of us too.

So this is a prayer for every Christian, every Christian. Paul prays that, "They might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding." That's something for all of us, the smallest of us, or the greatest of us in the Christian family. We all are essential, of course, in that family, but it's for every one of us, that we might walk worthily. So please bear this in mind, we're not talking about something that doesn't apply to you. This applies to you no matter who you are, a new Christian, or an old Christian. It applies even more to you if you've been a Christian for many years and

yet you have little knowledge of what Paul is talking about here when he talks about the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. That's the first lesson that's very obvious. This is a passage for all of us, and if we are to understand the knowledge of his perceptive will, how can we understand that if we do not read and understand the Bible.

I've come, as I've told you so many times, to believe, as the years have gone by, that the greatest sin of Christians is neglect of the Bible. And let me say this too, I think the greatest sin of Christians in evangelical churches is neglect of the Bible. It's been my observation, and I am including myself, it's been my observation that our greatest failure is we don't read the Bible. We listen to people talk about the Bible. We listen to preachers, like me. And we read books. But we do not read the Bible, and it should be reversed. We should read the Bible, and of course, the Bible tells us not to neglect teachers of the word or evangelists or those who have the gift of exhortation, but we are to read the Scriptures. The Scriptures are the source of our spiritual food. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God." That really is a sin for which we in Believers Chapel are guilty.

Now, Paul makes one other point that I want to make before we look at the trunk of this tree. Since he has said that he desires that they be filled with the knowledge of his will that they might walk worthily, it's obvious that there are two kinds of errors that frequently afflict Christians. One is unintelligent practice. People engage in the Christian life, but they haven't the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. The result is not knowing his will they flounder in the Christian life. Sometimes they do something that is praiseworthy. At other times, they do something that is not praiseworthy, that is blameworthy, unintelligent practice. On the other hand, it's possible for us to have an impractical knowledge. Some of us have that. We have knowledge of theological things, but in the actual carrying out of them, well that's something at which we miserably fail. So we have these two errors, unintelligent practice and impractical

knowledge. But in the Scriptures, we have both properly joined together, and what God has joined together let no man put asunder. This is the antidote to heresy. Paul is leading up to, to know his will and to walk worthily of the Lord.

Many years ago when I was in California listening to a Bible teacher in a conference in which I was a participant, the Bible teacher said, "It's very difficult to live truth that we do not know." That little remark I wrote down, it was made thirty years ago. I looked at some notes yesterday. It was thirty years ago that that statement was made and I noted it and even the date in which it was made because it impressed me at the time. So we have then in the Bible, the credenda, the things that are to be believed, the agenda, from which we get our word agenda, the things that are to be done and we are to hold these in proper balance. We want to avoid the hard bitter intellectualism, and we want to avoid the soft cheap sentimentalism of Christian wimplets, who abound so much today in the Christian church and talk about sentimentality as if it were Christian love. Now, we sum up what Paul has said. Love, faith and hope is not enough. In order to walk worthily of the Lord, we need to be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding and that knowledge of his will is found in holy Scripture.

Now the second thing, Paul talks about the trunk of this tree, a worthy walk, in verse 10. He says, "That ye might walk worthily of the Lord unto all pleasing." That's an interesting expression, "Unto all pleasing." And when you read this in the original text, it becomes even more interesting. At least it was to me. This word, translated "pleasing" in my Authorized Version from which I am reading is a word that referred in classical Greek to a "cringing subservience," the kind of thing that we might say about a yes man.

In fact, last week somewhere I saw a cartoon, and the cartoon was a cartoon of men who obviously were directors of a large corporation. They were seated around a table, and in front of each was a little placard. And there were three men on this side and three men on the other, and I guess the reason there were only seven men because one

was in the center was because the artist didn't have space to put them all around and still put a placard before them that you could read. So as you look from the left, there was a very solemn looking individual, director of a large corporation, it seemed. And in front of him was a placard that said, "Yes." And then second, "Yes." And then second, "Yes." And then on the right side, "Yes," "Yes," "Yes." And then in the center, the man in the center of the six was the little placard that said, "CEO." Well of course, the Chief Executive Officer is the one to whom the directors in this corporation did obeisance. Well we call such people yes men. Directors ought not to be yes men, but often they are. As a matter of fact, in almost every society, we have that. On church boards, yes men, and in almost any organization, yes men, and when we use that term yes men, that's a deprecating term.

But now when I first read this, I remember many years ago, "Be worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," and this was used to "cringing subservience," I thought well maybe that's not the figure that lies back of this. Perhaps it isn't, but nevertheless, as I've thought of it through the years, it seems to me it's imminently proper for a Christian. The Lord is a person with whom we should never debate, that is so far as whether we should do his will or not, we should be yes men. We should do his will. Every expression of the Lord should, for us, lead to perfect implicit obedience. So, I think that's perfectly alright, to say that, "We should walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing," or, as one of the older commentators translated it, "Unto every anticipation of his will." What a marvelous thing. What a marvelous status to have before the Lord in practice, to be really anticipating the Lord's will, and yielding to it. So there you have the necessary union of theology and ethics. We have, "Filled with the knowledge of his will to walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." Impossible, well of course, in one sense, impossible, but Paul is a person who is fond of the relevance of the impossible in the light of the power of God.

Now let's come to the branches. The branches of the tree are described in verse 10 through verse 14, and I'll just single out the important things. In fact, Paul in the original text uses four participles that define what it is to walk worthily of the Lord in this context. And the four are very simply discovered. He says in verse 10, "Being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God," the first, "Being fruitful in every good work," and the second, "Increasing in the knowledge of God," and then in verse 11, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness." And the fourth, in verse 12, "Giving thanks unto the Father." So if we want to know what it is that pleases the Lord, or what is a worthy walk. Well, it's a walk of fruitfulness. It's a walk of increasing knowledge. It's a walk of being, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering," and finally, its thanksgiving. Just briefly, we'll touch on them.

"Being fruitful," now the way that Paul expresses this in the original text emphasizes the fact that this fruit is something that is derived from the life that exists within. In a preceding verse where he's used the term fruitful, he laid stress upon the external diffusion of the word of God through Christians, but here when he talks about fruit bearing, attention is directed to the life within. If you should have a tree that bears fruit in your yard, or if you know of such a tree, you know that the fruit is the product of the life that is found in the sap that comes from the roots and flows up through the trunk and out into the branches and ultimately issues in fruit. Look at my grape vines, they have bunches of grapes on them, clusters of grapes on them.

My viticulture is still not very highly attained or worthwhile, but nevertheless I do have grapes and it's the product of the sap and the roots which in the last couple of months or so has flowed up through the grape vine and now I have grapes that are very green. And I'm looking forward to them and so are the birds in the neighborhood and probably some other of the animals as well. But at any rate, the emphasis lies upon the life within. No Christian is ever fruitful except through the life within, ultimately the life



of our Lord Jesus Christ, but when that life is responded to and yielded to, there comes fruit. Dr. Ironside used to tell the story of the little girl who used to give her testimony by saying, "I know I'm converted, and my mistress knows I'm converted too because now I sweep under the rugs in the house." Well that was an evidence of a change of life within. So he talks here about being fruitful in every good work.

And second, "Increasing in knowledge," outward dissemination seems to be ultimately reflected in this. "Increasing in knowledge," increasing in the knowledge of God, and then thirdly, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness." All commentators have noticed what seems to be here a surprising result of strengthening. In fact, it looks very much as if the apostle surely could not really mean what these words seem to mean. He says, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering." Well you might think that he would say, "Strengthened with all power that we might pound the pulpit with greater force and effectiveness," but for patience, that seems so strange, but in the Christian life, patience is a rare commodity. Some people's patience is so prominent. It stands out all over them. The apostle is not talking about that kind of patience. He's talking about the kind of patience that is accompanied with joyfulness.

On Friday, coming home with a friend of mine who is sitting in the audience today from the Byron Nelson Golf Tournament, I asked about a daughter-in-law of his who has had a very serious illness of cancer for some time, and he was describing to me her life now, and how she has been going down to the office to help her husband and some important work that he does about three days a week. And I naturally ask about how she was doing physically, and she seems to be doing well enough to do that. But then he went on to say the one thing about her that is so remarkable is that everything she does she does with joy, amazing joy and happiness in a situation that to most of us would seem most difficult, but she does it with joy. Well I don't happen to be closely acquainted with the spiritual condition of Sherry, but that certainly is a very revealing

indication of a right relationship deep down within, that in one of the most difficult circumstances of life that the circumstance can not only be born, but with joy. That's what Paul is saying when he says, "Strengthened with all might, according to his glorious power unto all patience and long suffering with joyfulness." Joy under pressure, that's the marvel of the work of God.

And finally, Paul talks about giving thanks. This completes the description of the worthy walk. You notice Paul is never finished with thanksgiving. He's already given us a thanksgiving for them, but he says thanksgiving is characteristic of the Christian life. Thanks for what, that we're alive? I went out of the 8:30 service this morning, went out to talk with a good friend who attends regularly at 8:30, and in the course of describing his business--he's in the oil business and doing satisfactorily--he says, "But of course, most of all, I'm glad, I'm happy that I'm here. Well that's one thing to be happy about, no doubt. But there are even more important things and Paul speaks about them here. He says, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," not deserving, but qualified us by virtue of what Christ has done on the cross.

I like the old story of the elderly man who had a little piece of property on a block that due to changes in the real estate became really valuable, and he was hoping that he would be able to sell it and live off the proceeds. So he kept it for a long time until finally a large real estate developer told his agent, "I want to buy everything on that block and want to buy every piece." Well the agent discovered this man had this little tiny piece of property, and so finally he made a deal with him to buy the property at a very good price that totally surprised the elderly man because he was not acquainted with the rising prices in real estate, and he asked when did they want the property. And the agent said probably in about a month.

So he hastily did everything he possibly could to refurbish his little house which was located on the lot. He had it painted. He fixed up the windows that had some holes

in them, did everything he possible could. And when the time came for signing over the property he asked the agent, "Well, what do you think of the house? Do you think it will be more enjoyable for the person?" He was very happy over what he has done. The agent said, as you might expect, he said, "Look we're not interested in that house. We're going to tear it down. We didn't buy this house for what's on it now, but what we're going to put on it." Well, really that's why God has redeemed us. He has redeemed us, not because of what we have in ourselves, but what he's going to do with us. We are the object of his divine sovereign love. And he has qualified us by virtue of what Christ has done, the payment made by him to transform us completely and to make us like the Son of God.

That's enough to be thankful for, but he goes on to say, "And has delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love," we who lived under tyranny, amid darkness, are now brought into the kingdom of the Son of his love. And finally, our time is just about up, he says, "In whom," you know whenever the apostle refers to the Lord Jesus Christ, it's almost inevitable he will do what a preacher does at 12:00, go on for a little bit, and notice the 14th verse, he's mentioned the kingdom of the Son of his love, and then he adds, "In whom we have our redemption, even the forgiveness of our sins." So, Paul says give thanks for the inheritance that you have. Give thanks for a new king and country, and give thanks for a new relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ, union with our covenantal head, which means the forgiveness of sins and redemption. The ransoming away, which we experience through the Lord Jesus Christ, is not by, as the Gnostics tell us, by understanding Gnostic doctrine. It's from a divine human mediator who has offered the sacrifice that saves the souls of sinners.

Samuel Rutherford once said some rather interesting words. He said something like this. I had these words here in my notes somewhere. He said that some people would have Christ without a cross. They would have Christ cheap, but the price will not

come down. The price of our redemption is the blood that was shed on Calvary's cross, and it's for him that we are most grateful and our thanksgiving is a thanksgiving that ultimately finds its climax in the fact that in union with Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

If you're here this morning and you've never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, then you do not have this redemption. You do not have this forgiveness of sins. We invite you, as an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ and on the authority of the word of God, to acknowledge your lost condition before the Lord God, acknowledge that the Scriptures say you are a sinner and you not only fall short, but you are headed for a Christless eternity, that Christ has offered the sacrifice that saves sinners, and acknowledging your condition before the Lord God and fleeing to the Christ of the cross, receiving him as your own personal Savior, God in marvelous grace gives redemption, the forgiveness of sins. May God, through the Holy Spirit, touch your heart and mine to see your lost condition, what Christ has done. And may you receive him as your own personal Savior. Let's stand for the benediction.

[Prayer] Our Heavenly Father, We thank Thee and praise Thee for the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. And we thank Thee and praise Thee for the apostle who preached it so plainly, so fervently, so zealously, and so faithfully. And we thank Thee that, by Thy grace, Thy hast preserved the word of God so that we, in 1986, may read it, ponder it and submit to it. Father if there are some in this audience who have never believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, we ask that at this very moment, by Thy grace, they may acknowledge their lost condition to Thee, and lean upon Christ for not and forever more. Go with us as we part. For Jesus' sake. Amen.