

# Atlantic Lyman Ministry 01 Atlantic Lyman Conference

by Robert Crawford

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of knowing the Lord Jesus Christ and the significance of Christ's headship over the church.*

**Duration:** 54:25

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Colossians 1:9-17

**Topics:** "Jesus Christ", "Divine Sovereignty"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker begins by highlighting the complexity of a particular sentence in the Bible, found in Colossians chapter one, verses nine to seventeen. He emphasizes the importance of understanding the subject matter, which is the person of Jesus Christ. The speaker then poses the question of whether Jesus is the Lord and Savior of the listeners. He supports this by referencing Hebrews 11:3 and Philippians 1:16, which speak to the creation and sustaining power of Jesus. The sermon concludes with a personal anecdote about witnessing a meteor shower and marveling at God's control over the universe. The speaker also shares a valuable lesson he learned from a preacher, cautioning against using excessive words without substantial meaning in preaching.

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## Transcript

...to the officials of the Colossians, Paul's letter to the saints at Colossae, a very well-known portion of Scripture, but we certainly make no apology for reading it publicly. Colossians chapter one, and we'll begin our reading at verse one. Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timotheus our brother, to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ which are at Colossae, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love ye have to all the saints, for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, for of ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel, which is come unto you as it is in all the world, and bringeth forth fruit as it doth also in you, since the day ye heard of it and knew the grace of God in truth. As ye also learned of Epaphras, our dear fellow servant, who is for you a faithful minister of Christ, who also declared unto us your love in the Spirit. For this cause we also, since the day we heard, 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 or pleasure,

being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might or all power according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness, giving thanks unto the Father which hath made us meet or fit to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in life, who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son, or the Son of his love, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

For by him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones or dominions or principalities or powers, all things were created by him and for him. And he is before all things, and by him all things consist, or all things hold together. And he is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all he might have the preeminence.

For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, or all the fullness dwell. And having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him I say to reconcile all things unto himself. By him I say whether they be things in earth or things in heaven.

And you that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. The Lord will bless to us the reading of the large portion of this first chapter, and we make no apology for reading this much of the word of God. Maybe you noticed in the introductory part of the letter to the saints at Colossae, Paul writes to the saints and faithful brethren in Christ, and he sends them a word of grieving.

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father. Then he adds, we give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus, praying always for you. I want you to keep that in your mind if you will, please.

Praying always for you. Since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus, I'd like to think with you of this expressing to us a little of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Both the previous verse from which I've quoted, verse 3, then verse 4, there are the divine titles of our Lord listed for us, our Lord Jesus Christ.

So that we're going to look for a little while at the person of Christ. Then I'd like to look with you at the second subject that these verses contain, and that is the prayer, the unceasing prayer of Paul for these believers. Mind you, some of us are poorer today because of the home call of people that prayed for us.

The last time I was at the conference with you here, I crossed the street to the home where Mrs. Morgan Sr. was living as a widow. And as we had spoken of the things of God, for I suppose I had known them as long as I had known any human beings at all, being in the same city as a boy. But she said a remarkable thing to me after I had had a little season of prayer with her.

She wasn't feeling too well. She said, you know, I pray for you every day. I pray for you every day.

I can't think of a thing I covet more than the prayers of God's people. And when somebody's taken home the glory that has prayed for you every day, there's just something of an emptiness, there's something lacking. Brother Mr. Kirk and I were both associated in years gone by with an esteemed servant of Christ, Mr. George Gould Sr. That dear man spent the major part of his waking hours in his latter years on his knees praying.

And sometimes I would be astounded as he would go over particular places and he would start with a family and name everyone in that family and pray for them definitely. Then go to another part of his

ministry for the Lord in his thinking, to another city perhaps or another area, and he would go over another family's name. And he could tell you whether they were professing faith in Christ or not.

The prayers of God's people are so important. As we were just reminded as we were exhorted to pray for our dear brother Tom and the others that are ill and some that are bereaved, Paul was unceasing, he was unfailing in his prayer for the saints at Colossae. But I'd like to notice that in the passage linked with this prayer, indissolubly linked, it can't be separated, there is the progress of the people of God at Colossae.

As Paul prayed, he did not just merely utter words. He prayed that these saints at Colossae would grow. And we'll come in a few minutes to the way they should grow, the development that should be there.

It's a grand thing to see people growing in divine things. Sometimes when you haven't been to a place for a while and you return and a brother rises to his feet and ministers the word of God or even speaks of the Lord in prayer, you have a feeling within you he has been with the Lord and there's nothing hindering his prayer life, there's nothing between his soul and God. It's a good thing at a conference season to search our hearts and to allow the Lord to search us to make sure there's nothing to hinder our making progress in divine things.

Well, let us come, first of all, in thinking of these three thoughts together, the person of Christ, the prayer of the Apostle, and the progress of the Christian. Let us think, first of all, not only in importance, but in our message of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You know, as I was looking at this passage this afternoon, it just came home to me with some degree of emphasis.

And I couldn't help but saying to myself, how can you really talk about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ? To describe him, to try and define him, if you want to use such a word, to try and speak of his characteristics, his actions, his words, his works, his wisdom, it doesn't matter what phase of his life you think of, as well as his unfinished work at God's right hand, we have to say that human tongue cannot tell the full story of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. But there are some things that are said about him here that I'd like to point out. As Paul prayed, he reminded the saints at Colossae that God was the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I hadn't been long saved until a dear brother who's long since in heaven put his hand on my shoulder one night and he said, Brother, it's never wasted time to give the Lord Jesus his full title. Always remember that God hath made this same Jesus both Lord and Christ. He said, in your study of the New Testament epistles, you'll notice how careful the Bible is, in general, to speak of him as Christ Jesus, our Lord, or our Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, there are exceptions and you'll know some of them. One was quoted for us already from 1 Corinthians 15, Christ died for our sins, according to the Scripture. There are other exceptions and there's a purpose and view, which it wouldn't be at my time and disposal to look at today, but in the main, again and again, and if you want an example, look at the letters to the Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and you'll see repeated again and again, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Oh, what a grand thing it is to know him. It has just been suggested that it's possible there is someone in our gathering today, and while we're reveling in the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, you're still a stranger to him. May the Lord grant that this meeting will not close until what happens at Colossae happens in your life.

And as Paul was able to say of them, we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all the saints and for the hope laid up in heaven. There were three grand Christian graces that they received and that they were developing. They were growing in as the saints of Thessalonica were.

Faith, hope, and love were on the increase. Well, I suggested we were going to consider for a little bit the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. You may be noticed that the subject is dealt with in detail.

By the way, for you grammarians, and you English specialists in school, in college, or in high school even, I'd like to suggest that you do something. Take Colossians 1, and beginning to read at verse 9, read through to the conclusion of verse 17, verse 9 through verse 17, and you'll find it's one of the longest, complex sentences that was ever penned. Some time ago, I took the sentence and tried to diagram it, and it was a real education to my own soul.

The subject, and the predicate, and the object, and the participial phrases, and the prepositions, and so on, they all suggest something to you, and you put that text in your mind and keep it there because it's the unfolding of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul says we haven't ceased to thank God and to pray for you, but then he lapses into a description of the one who was his Lord and Master. Now, let me ask you today, is he your Lord? Is he your Savior? Is he your Master? What a great trophy of the grace of God every one of us are who are saved by the grace of God.

But for his boundless grace, not one of us would be in this building this afternoon. We would be seeking our pleasure like the worldlings and trying to find satisfaction somewhere else. And by the way, if you profess to be a Christian, and you can't find joy in Christ, and you have to turn to the things of the world just like the worldlings, you can put it down that you're very far away in heart from God, or you don't know the Lord Jesus Christ at all.

The Christian does not need the world to satisfy him, and if he's satisfied with the world, he isn't satisfied with Christ. What says Paul of his wonderful person? He's the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature. When he speaks of the Lord Jesus Christ, he speaks of his personality, and we can only think of his words momentarily in passing.

We think of what he said when he was here on earth. His words were with power. Some of you may recall a dear man.

I don't know if he was very much in Iowa. I'm not prepared to say. But some of us as young Christians were deeply indebted to a man called William John McClure for his ministry.

About 34 years ago now, we had all finished our tent work for the summer and our open air work, and it was a custom for us to kind of get together at Detroit at their conference in the end of September. I can recall that there were somewhere in the neighborhood of 48 preaching brethren at that conference, 48 men who spent full time in the work of the Lord. You can hardly think sometimes now of 48 men serving the Lord full time.

But at any rate, they lined us all up on the platform, and of course, Mr. McClure was to preach to the audience, but he didn't. He read his text, and then he turned right around, and he began to preach to the preachers, and I was one of them. And I can remember very distinctly something he said, and it has been a blessing to me many a time.

He said, this third crop of preachers, or apparently we were the third crop. He said, this third crop of preachers, he said they can take a text out of a little, small portion of the Word of God and preach for an hour. And then he added what has been a blessing to my own soul.

He said, don't have bushels of words and spoonfuls of thoughts. Don't have bushels of words and spoonfuls of thoughts. You ever find a man guilty of taking an hour, and when the hour was over and you tried to dissect or get what was for the people of God, what was there for feeding their soul, it was perhaps just one or two little things that could be blessed of the Lord and would be blessed of the Lord.

But all of us are barely guilty, and I include myself just as much as anybody when I say this. We can have lots and lots of words. They seem to come so freely, words, and yet lacking at times of the power and the presence of God.

Now, just let me use the other side of the illustration. The Lord Jesus never spoke one unnecessary word. Not one.

He never spoke one word that was not in power. He always spoke with authority. We can all think of the illustration of this.

You remember the armed soldiers that came to arrest him, and they came back to their superior officers, and the officers said, Why didn't you bring him? What was their plea? Did they say he was too well armed? Did they say he has an army of followers that are armed and we couldn't touch him? They said one of the strangest things in all the New Testament. They said, Never a man speak like this man. All the Son of God had to do was speak, and even when they came to arrest him, when he spoke, they fell backward to the ground.

His word was with power. If we consider the words of the Lord Jesus, they're powerful, they're waiting, they're important words. If we think of the wisdom of the Son of God, we would have to go through all the four Gospels and point out case after case of how he walked in perfect wisdom.

Now, Solomon was a wise man, but he was also a foolish man. He was not always wise, but the Lord Jesus Christ is the personification of wisdom. He of God has made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

It says the apostle here, He's the image of the invisible God, the very imprint or expression of the person of God, and he's the firstborn of every creature. The Lord Jesus Christ stands unique and alone. There is no one else can take his place, and we'll be tied to the man that endeavors to do so.

He's the firstborn of every creation. Then says the apostle, in speaking of his priority, he says in the natural realm, By him all things were created that are in heaven and earth, visible and invisible and so on. He goes on to say, And he is before all things, verse 17, and by him all things hold together.

This poor world where our lot is cast is held by the mighty power of God. We have a number of young people with us this afternoon, and for their benefit I'd just like to mention an illustration. A lady of English nobility called Lady Hope called on Charles E. Darwin in his deathbed, and as Lady Hope visited Charles Darwin, who was the author of the theory of evolution, she found him reading the epistle to the Hebrews, and he was reading specifically in chapter 11, By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God.

As she spoke to Mr. Darwin, he began to weep, and he said, As a young man I had some very fanciful ideas as to how the world came into being, and he said, I put my fanciful notions in writing, not thinking they would ever be believed. And he said, My theories have filled the world. Would to God I could retract them now, but it's too late.

And Charles Darwin, the author of the theory of evolution that is taught in our schools, by the way, most schools, and I'm not referring to Iowa, for I don't know your school system, I know our own, and the theory of evolution is propagated with Charles Darwin, the author, and children are told as to how the world gradually came into being, and came up the ladder of one sequence after another until we evolved into being men and women such as we are, and then they can't tell you why the evolving stopped all of a sudden, and there's no improvement or no addition, and they can't tell you why man's becoming worse and worse all the time in the depths of his sin. By him all things were created. You needn't have no difficulty whatsoever.

You take Hebrews 11 and 3, By faith we understand the world's were framed by the word of God. Take Philippians 1 and 16, for by him were all things created that are in heaven and earth, and it goes on to enumerate the powers and the governments and the rules and the laws. Then it sums up by saying, and he is before all things, by him all things hold together.

By him all things hold together. Last month one night, our paper said that there would be a meteor shower somewhere between 12 midnight and 2 or 3 in the morning, and it likely would be well worth seeing if it was a clear night. It gave an idea where to look for in the heavens, what direction.

So I got up and went out into our backyard, and it wasn't as spectacular as the paper had suggested it would be, but it was most beautiful to behold this meteor shower as these brilliant lights flashed off in every direction, something like a big firecracker or fireworks display. And I couldn't help but stand in wonder and amazement and recognize the God who is my Father controls all this, and yet he's given to poor puny man the knowledge of when to expect such a shower to occur. The astronomers knew just when to expect it and where to look for in the sky, and still they questioned that God created the heavens and the earth.

We have no difficulty whatsoever. He is before all things, and by him all things hold together. But he's not only first in the natural realm, thank God he's first in the spiritual realm.

Our Bible tells us that not only were all things created by him, and he was before all things, and by him all things hold together, but it says in verse 18 where we were reading, he is the head of the body, the church. The church who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, and so on. And we'll look at that a little in a moment or two.

I already quoted our dear brother Mr. Gould Sr., who's home in heaven and missed by those of us who shared in his prayer life. One day we were journeying to a conference together, and as will happen we had car trouble, and we were pulled into the gas station trying to get repairs to continue our journey. The dear old gentleman was praying, and then after a while he slipped his hand into his pocket, and he took out his little small Bible that he carried with him in his pocket, and he was sitting there reading.

A gentleman walked up to him and he said, I take it that you're a preacher. He said, yes, I have the honor of preaching the gospel of the grace of God. I have that honor.

Well said the man to him, and what branch of the church are you with? What branch of the church are you with? Mr. Gould, in his own inimitable way, he said, oh, I'm not in any branch. I'm connected to the head, and I'm in the main stem. There's no problem with me as to any branches whatsoever.

I'm connected right to the head of the Lord Jesus Christ. He had a word further with that dear man, and I think perhaps clarified in his mind what he had never seen, what we sometimes even forget to recognize. We have the head of our church, of the church in heaven, and the head, thank God, we are members of his body, but he is still our head, our glorious head.

Our glorified head is in heaven. In the spiritual realm, he is the head, and then there's another word used, and it says that in all things, he might have the preeminence. You remember in the little epistle of John, John says, I wrote to the church so that it's a correct thing to write to the assembly or to the church local, but diatrophies who loves to have the preeminence receiveth of not.

There was a man who had taken the place that belonged to Christ. He had become preeminent. He had usurped the place of authority that belongs to the Lord alone.

Thank God we hold to the head, and we recognize no man on earth, and I could use some titles if I chose to. Neither bishop or any other title we hold to none of them as being the titular head of the church on earth. Not at all.

Our head is in heaven, and we're linked to him. I'm thankful when I seek to serve the Lord, as I have been trying to do for the last 34 years now. In trying to serve the Lord, I'm very, very thankful.

I neither have to write to some headquarters to say, Is it all right if I go to Atlantic Conference? Or to have some headquarters write to me and say, You're to appear at such and such a convention or conference. You're to be at such a convention. Well, that happens in the circles that are around us.

And I'm thankful too that I don't have to come back and report my success or failure. Sometimes our efforts are failure. I don't have to report to a committee and to have them say, Well, you'll have to give up your charge.

You're not accomplishing anything. All our relationships are directly with the head. Where we go for meetings, where we attend a conference, where we seek to minister the Word of God, and our reports as well, they're all written on high.

We had a dear old brother. He stood about six feet six, Mr. W.P. Duggee. And he had arms and legs in keeping.

He was one of the tallest men with the longest arms I think I can ever recall meeting in this world. That dear brother one day, somebody said to him in my presence, I haven't seen your name in the magazine lately. And with his own droll sort of a speaking way, he said, My record is on high.

My record is on high. It doesn't really matter too much if people take notice of us here. Maybe you're a weary Sunday school teacher and you begin to think you'll give up that class.

Don't do it. Maybe you're a brother that has led among the sheep of God's flock and you've tried to be a help and a blessing to the people of God. And you say, Well, I think my day's done.

I'll give it up. Don't do it. Keep serving the Lord and holding the head as the Ephesian letter tells us, holding the head and growing up into Him which is Christ.

Now He is the head and He must have the preeminence. Let me just ask my own heart right now in the fear of God, is Christ the preeminent one in my life? Or do I do my planning and then expect His approval on my plan? I would have to be very honest with you and tell you that I have known times when I was completely out of the mind of the Lord in being in certain places. I'm not speaking now of being in places of amusement.

I'm speaking of being in certain assemblies and I felt that I was out of the mind of the Lord in going there. Either they were not prepared to receive my ministry or there was something wrong in the assembly that it wasn't suitable for them to have meetings at that time, especially a gospel effort. And I could tell and sense that God didn't want me there at all.

It's a most burdensome feeling and you never get rid of it until you get back into the mind of the Lord and seek to do His will. Now He's the preeminent one. In all things He must have the preeminent.

Is He preeminent in your individual life? Is He preeminent in your family life? Is He preeminent in your business life? Is He preeminent in our assembly life? The text as it reads in the English says that in all things He might have the preeminent. That's unfortunate. The word things doesn't belong there at all.

It isn't relative to things He's to have the preeminent. He's to have the preeminent, and if I were to paraphrase the text as it's intended, that in all gatherings He might have the preeminent. In all the gatherings of the local church He might have the preeminent.

Things are irrelevant. The Lord takes care of things. He says, Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

We get very taken up with things at times, and fail to be taken up with the divine and the important, the eternal. Oh, thank God for the preeminence of Christ, and for giving Him that place, and enjoying doing so, enjoying doing it. I mentioned diatrophies, and by the way, just in passing, let me clarify that statement.

Diatrophies were accused to receive the Apostle John. Apparently he was a man of preeminence as well as taking that place. He was a prominent man, I should say, as well as taking the preeminent.

But John adds the most remarkable thing that I've taken great courage in. He says, But if I come... He didn't say, John's going to stop me now, and I'll have to take his advice because he's made himself the preeminent one. No, he said, If I come.

He didn't just boldly say, I'll go anyhow. Apparently there's the subjection to the will of the Lord involved, and he says, If I come. If I'm led along, I'll have somewhat to say to Him, and you all know the connection in the parable, in the passage.

The person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Do you wonder that Paul wrote to Timothy, and he said, Great is the mystery of godliness. God manifests in flesh.

And do you wonder if the words in Hebrews chapter one, God, who at sundry times and in divers manners taken time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us in His Son. The one who was the babe of Bethlehem, who was the infinite, was the infinite. The one who was the infant of

days, was the ancient of days.

The one who was lying apparently helpless in the bosom of Mary, was still the mighty upholder of all things by the word of His power. Great is the mystery of godliness. Let me just ask as we leave this talk, what does the person of the Lord Jesus Christ mean to you? You know, there's no dividing the issue at all.

He's either nothing to you, or He's everything to you. And there's no in between. Either the Lord Jesus means absolutely nothing to you.

You may know the story of the gospel and all that, but if you haven't yielded your life wholly and solely to Him and enthroned Him as Lord, He means nothing to you. But to the believer, He's everything. And the true Christian who's in touch with God thinks truthfully, take the world, but give me Jesus.

All its joys are but a name. The person of Christ. Let me just take a moment or two with you.

I'd like to point out the prayer of the apostle. How did he pray? Look at verse 3, if you still have your Bible open. We give thanks to God.

His prayer was in the proper spiritual atmosphere. It was a prayer that began with thanksgiving. Then you'll notice that there was a fourfold cause for thanksgiving.

We've already referred to them, until we just mention them again. He knew of their faith. He knew of their love.

He knew of their hope. And finally, He knew of their fruitfulness. It bringeth forth fruit, verse 6, as it doth also in you.

What was it that had brought forth this fruit? It was the gospel of the grace of God. There's nothing cheers the gospel preacher, the servant of the Lord, like having someone come to him and say, I just took the Lord Jesus as my Savior. It's a joy that you wouldn't trade for all the world.

The joy of knowing that you've been a little instrument in God's hand of pointing the way to the Savior and some soul has found Him and enthroned Him as Savior and Lord. Oh, what a privilege it is. Let me just say in passing, I'm afraid we're not as gospel-minded as we once were.

There's a tendency in areas, and again, I'm a stranger to your area of country, but there's a tendency in the area where I live to give up having gospel meetings. I did happen to drop in on a prayer meeting not long ago, and the brother who made the announcement asked special requests for prayer for their gospel series. So, of course, when it came opportunity and I thought, letter to the Lord, I prayed for the gospel series.

When the meeting was over and I was talking to him, I said, when do the meetings begin? Oh, he said, they're beginning Thursday night. And I said, and when do they finish, or how long do they think of going on? Oh, he said, they finish Friday night. We're having two nights of a special gospel effort.

It would be almost amusing if it weren't so dead serious. Calling that a gospel series? Two nights? People hardly get to know in a town you're there in two nights. They hardly become aware that you're having meetings until the meetings are gone on for a little while, and until you've gone to their door and talked to them and tried to get them to come on out to the meeting.

We live in a danger when the gospel is being downgraded and there's less preaching of the gospel. By the way, let me just say in passing that there are places where the gospel is not preached even on Sunday night. It's ministry for the people of God, and it's always ministry for the people of God.

When I read your conference circular and I noted last night and tonight were both for the proclamation of the gospel, I said, thank God, the gospel is going to go forth twice. And we still believe that souls will be won to Christ as a result of the conference meeting and the preaching of the gospel. And our prayers are with our dear brethren who preach the gospel.

Thank God for the power of the message and says the Apostle, I mingle my prayer with thanksgiving. I'm thankful for the faith that you exercise in Christ Jesus, the love you have for all the saints. Now, this is an important little point.

It doesn't say the love you have for some of the saints. The saints at Colossae weren't like those in Corinth. They hadn't divided into little cliques and said, well, Paul's my man and Apollos is my man and Cephas is my man and the last clique of all saying we don't need any man, we just have Christ.

They divided themselves up into little groups and they were devoid of the blessing of the Lord. Says Paul to the saints at Colossae, he said, I've heard of the love you have for all the saints. You know, it isn't hard to love some of God's people, but some of them are difficult at times.

Nearly everywhere you travel, you'll find that there's somebody and they're just a little bit hard to get along with or you have to pamper them a little bit. You have to baby them, I was going to say, to get along with them. Well, that doesn't alter the fact we must have love to all the people of God.

This is one of the proofs of our divine nature. We know we have passed from death into life because we love the brethren. But now we'll leave this Thanksgiving and let us just note his request.

He said, As I prayed, verse 9, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will, that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding. Now, I would have to be very honest to tell you that I cannot plumb the depths of this statement. I look at it, I think I have a reasonable intelligence to consider it, but he was thinking that they might be filled with a knowledge, with knowledge, what kind of knowledge? Knowledge of the will of God.

And then with that knowledge in all wisdom, carrying out that knowledge in wisdom and spiritual understanding or spiritual maturity. Understanding, really knowing the mind and will of the Lord. I have a son of 22.

He was graduated from college in June, having secured scholarships through the years. And graduation week, we of course as parents were invited to the outdoor affair where there were 4,300 graduates from the class. 4,300.

At any rate, he said, Dad, I'd like to take you to the computer room where I spent most of my time. When we got to the computer room, there was this large, intricate piece of machinery as well as a number of others and those who are familiar with computers could correct me. I think the number was called a 703.

It's supposed to be one of the most involved computers. I could be wrong on the number, but I think it was a 703. He said, I want to work a problem for you.

So he reached over and took out of a file a big sheaf of punched cards. Somehow or other in his lifting them, he didn't get them in proper order and one or two dropped out of the pile and he wasn't just too sure where they went in this stack of cards. But at any rate, he fed them into the machine and it began this clickety, clickety, clickety sound and I stood and looked at it and sure enough, it was typing out something.

It was writing away and writing away until finally it came to a sudden stop and all it said, as he showed me on the paper and I think he was a little chagrined, it said, Sorry, this won't work. Sorry, this won't work. Now with all man's ingenuity and knowledge, there had been some little perforation that was not right and the machine rejected the rest of the equation or the question and wouldn't come up with the answer and didn't come up with the answer.

I think he was a little embarrassed with it. I felt a little relieved to tell you the truth because I looked at the machine as though it was something far, far beyond my comprehension. I would have to be honest with you, I don't understand how they work.

I don't begin to understand and I don't intend to. Do you know, let me say dear saints of God, I would rather have a little spiritual understanding than all the knowledge of the greatest brains in the world. Far, far more important to be able to know a little of God and to walk in His will and in His ways than to know all that can be known because you never get to the end of knowledge.

People are studying and studying and they really never come to the end. There are further advancements and further advancements all the time until knowledge of ten years ago in a science textbook is obsolete today. It's no longer usable.

But what Paul prayed for is permanent. He said, I'd like to see you filled with the knowledge of His will. I'd like to see you walking in wisdom and I'd like to see you mature in your spiritual understanding.

Now just to close, let me note with you the progress of the Christian life. It's linked immediately with the prayer of Paul. In fact, they're intertwined.

If you've ever been out in the northwest of our country, you have likely seen the large redwood trees. They're a real strange phenomenon. I never go to the Pacific Northwest, but I stand at the base of one or two of them.

They're anywhere from three to four hundred feet into the air, gigantic in their trunk, and you stand and look at them and you wonder how they can grow so very, very high and there are just a few branches at the top. You wonder at their stately majesty. A park ranger said to me one day, I suppose you wonder how these trees grow so tall.

Well, he said, the reason is they don't put their roots down at all. Their roots don't go down at all. He said, you'll never find a redwood tree alone.

They never grow alone. Their roots are always intertwined with other redwood trees and they grow up together and they're linked together under the surface of the ground and the one holds the other and helps the other. Isn't that a beautiful illustration of the people of God? We can stand for God since we're linked together with a bond of love and kept by the power of God.

Oh, thank God for that link that's between us as fellow believers. Now, in our progress, the first thing we must be is where Paul finished in his praying. We must be subject to the will of God, subject to His will.

Very, very often, people have come to us through the years and said, how can I know the will of God? Somewhere in my files at home, I have a little book and it says four ways to discern the will of God. I have another little booklet and it's entitled Ten Ways of Discerning the Mind of the Lord. Well, whether there are four or there are ten, let me say that you never discern the will of God apart from the word of God.

Never. God's will never runs contrary to His word. And basically, there is the word of God in our discerning the will of God.

Then in discerning His will, there's a subjection to His authority. We don't go to the Lord and say, now this is what I'd like to do and this is what I want to do and seek Heaven's approval on it. We take the directions from the Lord Himself and we seek His will.

We try to discern His will. And when we discern His will in His presence, subject to His word, subject to His authority and wholly in His presence with nothing hidden, nothing reserved, God will reveal to us His own gracious will and His will is best for us. The best I could do would be to quote Romans 12 where Paul says, As I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God you present your body as a living sacrifice, wholly acceptable unto God which is your reasonable service.

Be not conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of your mind that you may prove. Now listen to what he says. That you may prove what is that good, acceptable, perfect will of God.

There are three things that are said to describe the will of God. They are only on the basis on the degree in which we subject ourselves to the Lord Himself where we bow and can sing as we sometimes do, I bow me to thy will, O God, and all thy ways adore. We take our places subject to His own gracious will.

Now the first thing in the progress of the Christian life, we must be subject to the will of God. Are you subject to His will? I don't need to turn the question to you. I can turn it on myself.

There was a day in our Christian experience when very, very quickly and suddenly, I decided to move. I had a wife and two small children at the time and made a very sudden move. Went into a real estate office on a Thursday morning, told the man we'd like to sell our little bungalow and he said, I have a buyer for it.

I'll have him there at twelve o'clock. The house was sold that very Thursday and the furniture was put in storage on Saturday and we were without a home and with two small children. Do you know that the Lord led us by a way that was difficult, by strange ways and I can only say in all sincerity, I was out of the will of God in that move.

Completely. It was nothing but a hasty act. Had I considered it a little longer, things could have been corrected that were wrong that needed correction and we could have stayed in the same place, I'm quite sure and served the Lord from there.

I'm telling you this because some people get the erroneous impression that preachers never make a misstep and they never do anything wrong. Let me say it's only by the bitter school of experience that we learn a little of the mind and will of God. Sometimes being in subject, not in subjection to the Lord Himself.

But not only are we subject to His will, notice verse 10 if you will, that you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasure. I like that better, unto all pleasing. Some think it means to please themselves.

That isn't what's in view at all. It's pleasure brought to the Lord. Walking worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing.

This word worthy is a unique one too. It's used in connection with a letter that Paul suggests would be given to a dear sister who was going to Rome and he sent a commendation with her which is a good thing to do and he said that your receiver has become a saint. And that's exactly the word that's used here for worthy.

Walk as becomer in a becoming manner. Walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. The Christian life is a most practical life.

It doesn't consist in going to conferences and hearing messages and then going away home and closing our Bible and putting it on the shelf for a week and forgetting all about it. The Christian life is a walk and that's a metaphor that's used, a simile that's used repeatedly in the New Testament of the walk of the Christian. The life of the Christian is that daily humdrum walk if you want to call it.

That daily existence whether in the home, in the office, in the factory, on the farm. It matters not where even in the schoolroom. We need to walk worthy of the Lord, subject to His will.

Then again, we become fruitful in every good work, verse 10 says. Now we're not only subject to His will, worthy in our walk, but we're fruitful in our work. Being fruitful in every good work.

Are you fruitful to the Lord? If you're not, you're not a Christian. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ brings a degree of fruit to God. It may be only 30-fold.

It may be 60-fold. It may be 100-fold if the case may be. But everyone that has put simple childlike faith in the Savior, they become fruitful in their lives.

They're useful to the Lord. Now this is evidenced in a very practical way. It says in verse 11, as they become fruitful in every good work, they go back where they started.

They increase in the knowledge of God. Do you know God better than you did when we came together Friday night first? When we first began to consider His Word and were reminded of our shoes of iron and of brass? Reminded of the shield and of the rod and the staff, you'll recall? Do you know God better now than you did then? I should, and so should you. Increasing in the knowledge of God, but then in verse 11, strengthened with all power according to His glorious power or to the power of His glory.

Now let me just point out the end of verse 11. Unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness. Just the casual reading of those three words doesn't mean very much, but it takes in the three realms of our testimony.

Patience is self-worth. How impatient we are at times. Unto all patience.

Then longsuffering is what we are to others, to the people of God. If we have endured a little patience and if we have grown a little in patience as a result of experience, then we show a little longsuffering to others. Then it's evidenced by a joyful spirit.

It's seen and known by all and appreciated by God Himself. With all joyfulness, showing our real cheer and joy in the things of the Lord. Strengthened to witness for others and it leads to thanksgiving and worship.

I must close by pointing out that all that we can be in our progress in the Christian life, it all goes back to two things in our passage as we read together. Not only do we grow in the will of God and subjection to His Word and His will and His ways and in His work, but we go back and we look at where all these blessings have come to us. Where are they from? They are from the One whom we have redemption, verse 14, through His blood, the forgiveness of sins.

And then it ends by saying, through whom ye have been reconciled, whether having made peace through the blood of His cross by Him to reconcile all things unto Himself. We're forgiven, we're redeemed, and we're reconciled. Do you wonder that we say and sing truthfully more about Jesus would I know, more of His grace to others show, more of His loving kindness see, more of His grace who died for me.

May the Lord give us that desire as we listen further to His Word. Give us that real desire to bow to the will of God, to know what it is to value the person of Christ, to pray for our beloved brethren and sisters in all their need, and to seek to make divine progress in the days till He comes. Praise the Lord.

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