

Pine Knoll Sabbath School Study Notes

First Quarter 2026: *Uniting Heaven and Earth: Christ in Philippians and Colossians*

Lesson 2 “Reasons for Thanksgiving and Prayer”

Read for this week’s study

Philippians 1:1–18; 1 Corinthians 13:1–8; Jeremiah 17:9; Colossians 1:1–12; 1 Peter 1:4; Psalm 119:105; Isaiah 30:21.

Memory Text

“Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6, NKJV).

Lesson Outline from Adult Sabbath School Study Guide

- I. Introduction
- II. Fellowship in the Gospel
- III. Paul’s Prayer Requests
- IV. Spiritual Discernment Applied
- V. Gospel Fruit
- VI. Prayer Power
- VII. Further Study

Questions and Notes for Consideration

Facilitator: Jon Paulien

1. Paul intentionally begins his epistles with words of greeting and thanksgiving. Read Philippians 1:3-4 and Colossians 1:2-3. Do an internet search on the health benefits of thankfulness. What are some of them? (Sabbath Afternoon)
2. Read Philippians 1:5-8. What specific things is Paul thankful for? How do you understand the promise of verse 6, that God will “finish the good work in you”? What does that mean? Will God’s good work continue after the Second Coming (Rev 22:2)? (Sunday)
3. What is the focus of Paul’s prayer in Philippians 1:9-11? What do we learn about prayer from these verses? Can prayer ever be a negative in a Christian’s life? Can it

- make you a worse person? What is the relative importance of love in the life of a Christian/Adventist? (Monday)
4. Read Philippians 1:12-18. How did Paul view his imprisonment? What lessons can we learn from his attitude in the face of difficulties? (Tuesday)
 5. What lessons have you learned from the tough experiences of life? How can one learn to trust God in the midst of difficulties? (Tuesday)
 6. Read Colossians 1:3-8. What three things does Paul thank God for? In what sense are these three gifts of God that we also should thank Him for? It appears that Paul spent a lot of time praying for people he never met. What difference do you think “blind intercession” makes? In verses 7-8 Paul notes that one of his ministry colleagues, Epaphras, is a native of Colossae. He is the link between Paul and a church that Paul did not found and has never met. (Wednesday)
 7. Read Colossians 1:9-12. What specific requests do you notice in Paul’s prayer for the Colossians? How do we gain the knowledge of God’s will in practical terms? (Thursday)
 8. If someone asked you how you know that God is leading in a certain direction, what would you say? (Thursday)
 9. Paul could have succumbed to anxiety in prison. Will I get enough to eat? What will happen to the churches while I am here? Will I get out alive? But instead he seems to have followed the practice of Jesus outlined in *Ministry of Healing*, 478-479. “It is not for us to shape our future. ‘By faith, Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.’ Hebrews 11:8. Christ in His life on earth made no plans for Himself. He accepted God’s plans for Him, and day by day the Father unfolded His plans.” (Friday)
 10. Think about the past week and list things you are thankful for. When you run out of things to list, pick up a dictionary and discover things you haven’t yet thanked God for!

Thoughts from Graham Maxwell

Look at Philippians 1:9-11:

It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

“Knowledge and discernment, so that they might approve,” which suggests choices. And you remember the choices in heaven, among the angels. The choices in the Garden of Eden. Paul has a lot to say about discernment. He puts it alongside knowledge, also; and he talks about the

mind. There are many who, in the realm of religion, want to lay intellect aside. Paul doesn't. You remember in 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22, his advice there: "Test everything; hold fast what is good, and abstain from every form of evil."

"Test everything." Do you have to prove everything? It means "to test." Examine, investigate everything. An idea that Ellen White espoused very strongly. So long as we're in a universe influenced so strongly by the adversary who was persuasive enough to win one-third of the brilliant angels to join with him, we had better be very discerning, and test everything, for sure. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, The Picture of God in all 66 – Philippians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, recorded May 1982, Riverside, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct links:*

<http://pkp.cc/69MMPOGIA66> (Part 1) <http://pkp.cc/70MMPOGIA66> (Part 1)

So now, imagine that the Father appears visibly among us here at Loma Linda this evening. How would we speak to Him? Or to make it more personal, let us say that He is willing to meet us in the fellowship room. As many of us as could, would go over there and gather around Him, just as the crowds did around Jesus; and Mary loved to sit there at His feet. Supposing we should have the inestimable privilege of talking there freely with God the Father for a whole hour. Would it be appropriate at the end for someone among us to arise and say, "This has been such a special occasion, don't you think we ought to close this meeting with a word of prayer?" Or would it be correct to understand that talking, conversing, having conversation with our God as with a friend for that whole hour actually is real prayer, and we have been praying the whole hour long?

Now God is seated there and we are gathered around Him. What should we say? Should we be the first to speak? Once we have started speaking, would we talk all the time? Or would we let God speak for a while? Normally, when we pray we do all the talking, don't we? And then we say "Amen" and go about our business, or go to sleep. It would be like meeting in the room with our heavenly Father, and talking to Him incessantly for several minutes, and then saying, "Amen, thank you very much," and then going home. It wouldn't make sense, would it? It certainly wouldn't be conversation as with a friend.

Conversation means at least two people speaking. But how do we converse with God when we can't see Him just now, because of the present emergency? We all understand that emergency and why in mercy He does not reveal Himself visibly to us at this moment. And so, the Bible is called the Word of God—God speaking to us. If we wish to hear God speak, except in most extraordinary occasions, God speaks to us through the Bible. We speak to Him in prayer. Truly, as someone has said, "We commune with God through the study of the Scriptures."

So, what language would you use? Then how would we address Him? Jesus addressed His Father as “*Abba*, Father.” *Abba* is Aramaic for “father.” So it is almost like saying, “Father, Father,” although it is a term of endearment. Some versions translate “*Abba*, Father” as “Dear Father,” the way some of us like to start our public prayers and private too, Dear Father. You remember Paul in Romans and Galatians invites us to do precisely that. He says that when the Spirit of truth dwells within us, we will address the Father as “Dear Father.”

But most important, what would we talk about? Could you on such a precious occasion say, “Thank you, God, for today’s groceries and here is my list for tomorrow, amen,” and then go on about your business? Or more seriously, right there with the Father, might you say, “Bless the missionaries as they carry the truth to the far-flung corners of the earth”? The Lord might say, “How sweet. How is it that you only think of these things when you are at the time of prayer?” Of course, if you are the mother of a missionary, how appropriate for you to talk to God about your loved ones. And missionaries, above all people, deserve and need our prayers. But if we are not thinking about them the rest of the time, just that when we talk to God, we feel that we should only mention the most lofty themes and not the things we have been really thinking about all day?

You see, for some of us, those well-worn phrases about the missionaries and other sorts of things we understand we **ought** to mention when we pray, might seem rather empty when we are talking face to face with God as with a friend. Or, if we should leave the meeting and walk through a garden in the community, wouldn’t it be natural, walking with God, to comment with admiration on the beauty and fragrance of a rose, and the beautiful sounds of the mockingbirds? Aren’t they magnificent right now? And then that lovely, lonely sound of the mourning dove. Why couldn’t we tell Him how beautiful it was to create things that way? Or walking through the garden, would we simply say, “We thank thee, Lord, for the beauties of nature that surround us,” and move on to some other topic? We do have well-worn phrases to cover these things. It seems to me that if God really were our Friend, we would take time to talk about these things and to be more specific about them, as we would with other members of the family. We might even venture to ask Him about the thorns on the rose. “Did you put them there? If so, why?”

Or is it all right to ask questions of our God? Job did, and he honored God with his confidence. You remember how boldly, but reverently, Job agonized with God—to the consternation of his friends. They worried that God would surely smite Job for daring to talk to the Father like this. The whole book of Job is on this subject. I have picked just one place. Look at Job 29:2-4 and 30:20. Job cries to God:

If only my life could once again be as it was when God watched over me. God was always with me then . . . and the friendship of God protected my home . . . [But now] I call to you, O God, but you never answer, and when I pray, you pay no attention. (GNT)

How that worried Job's friends! But was God offended? No, look at our next verse, Job 42:7. God said to the three friends, who were so worried: "You did not speak the truth about me the way my servant Job did." (GNT) You see, Job knew God, and He honored God with those cries. God was not talking to him just then. And Job was deeply upset because their friendship seemed to be at an end. So what upset the friends complemented God, and spoke well of their relationship. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15, "Talking to God as a Friend" recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

Lou: We must move on to some other very important questions in this same connection. This phrase, "Thy will be done." If we really want and mean for God's will to be done, why ask for anything? Wouldn't it be more trusting really to just say, "God, do what You're going to do"?

Graham: Ah, yes. So many things come to mind, but especially watching Jesus do it. He really was an example in almost every important area. He would say to His Father, "Thy will be done; nevertheless, . . ." I think that if prayer is conversation with God, we will be honest with Him. "I do not relish what's coming. I want to understand this, and I want You to do things Your way. I want to defer to Your wisdom. Nevertheless, may I talk to You about this? May I tell You honestly I want this, I want that, I shrink from this, I shrink from that?" That's real, honest conversation. But behind it all, we are going to defer to God's wisdom, of course. I think it underscores the idea that it's genuine, honest conversation.

Lou: But to turn that the other way, there are those who express real concern that when you are praying, for example, for someone who is very seriously ill, a loved one that you very much want to be healed, that it's somehow an expression of a lack of faith, to, after you've said, "Lord, please heal my mother or my child," then to say, "Nevertheless, Thy will be done." Wouldn't it be more trusting to just say, "Lord, heal. I believe You are going to"?

Graham: Because we want to tell Him what to do. It would seem to me, it shows much more trust to say, "God, You know best, and You do that for this person."

Lou: You're saying then that it's perfectly all right to express my will very forcibly, I mean, to tell God exactly what I want.

Graham: Or I'm not telling the truth. I want this person to be well. This is my mother. Please make her well.

Lou: But then is that a lack of trust?

Graham: "Thy will be done" is much more trust.

Lou: Not a lack of faith.

Graham: No, and I love it when the person you are praying for says, “Look, you don’t have to dictate to God. He doesn’t have to heal me for me to trust Him. I’m willing for Him to do whatever is best, and you may pray that way.” And you know from experience, isn’t it easy to pray around the bedside when the patient, someone you love especially, trusts God like that. I’ve had many, many experiences like that. It is very moving. {Graham Maxwell. Excerpt from the audio series, Conversations About God, #15 with Lou Venden, “Talking to God as a Friend” recorded May 1984, Loma Linda, California} *To listen to the entire audio of the above reference, click on the following direct link: <http://pkp.cc/15MMCAG>*

Further Study with Ellen White

Many have an idea that they must do some part of the work alone. They have trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sin, but now they seek by their own efforts to live aright. But every such effort must fail. Jesus says, “Without Me ye can do nothing.” Our growth in grace, our joy, our usefulness,—all depend upon our union with Christ. It is by communion with Him, daily, hourly,—by abiding in Him,—that we are to grow in grace. He is not only the Author, but the Finisher of our faith. It is Christ first and last and always. He is to be with us, not only at the beginning and the end of our course, but at every step of the way. David says, “I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.” Psalm 16:8. {SC 69.1}

It is part of God’s plan to grant us in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask. {GC 525.2}

The way to the throne of God is always open. You cannot always be on your knees in prayer, but your silent petitions may constantly ascend to God for strength and guidance. When tempted, as you will be, you may flee to the secret place of the Most High. His everlasting arms will be underneath you. {HP 86.2}

It is when we come into difficult places that He reveals His power and wisdom in answer to humble prayer. Have confidence in Him as a prayer-hearing, prayer-answering God. He will reveal Himself to you as One who can help in every emergency. He who created man, who gave him his wonderful physical, mental, and spiritual faculties, will not withhold that which is necessary to sustain the life He has given. He who has given us His word—the leaves of the tree of life—will not withhold from us a knowledge of how to provide food for His needy children. {MH 199.4}

[T]he prayer that comes from an earnest heart, when the simple wants of the soul are expressed just as we would ask an earthly friend for a favor, expecting that it would be granted—this is the prayer of faith. {ML 19.2}

In the secret place of prayer, where no eye but God's can see, no ear but His can hear, we may pour out our most hidden desires and longings to the Father of infinite pity, and in the hush and silence of the soul that voice which never fails to answer the cry of human need will speak to our hearts. {Pr 182.6}

We may commune with God in our hearts; we may walk in companionship with Christ. When engaged in our daily labor, we may breathe out our heart's desire, inaudible to any human ear; but that word cannot die away into silence, nor can it be lost. Nothing can drown the soul's desire. It rises above the din of the street, above the noise of machinery. It is God to whom we are speaking, and our prayer is heard. {Pr 188.1}

Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend. Not that it is necessary in order to make known to God what we are, but in order to enable us to receive Him. Prayer does not bring God down to us, but brings us up to Him. {Pr 8.4}

When love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not because of favors received from them, but because love is the principle of action. Love modifies the character, governs the impulses, subdues enmity, and ennobles the affections. This love is as broad as the universe, and is in harmony with that of the angel workers. Cherished in the heart, it sweetens the entire life and sheds its blessing upon all around. It is this, and this only, that can make us the salt of the earth. {MB 38.1}

Love is the basis of godliness. Whatever the profession, no man has pure love to God unless he has unselfish love for his brother. But we can never come into possession of this spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously. The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within—when the sunshine of heaven fills the heart and is revealed in the countenance. {COL 384.2}

Holiness is wholeness to God. The soul is surrendered to God. The will, and even the thoughts, are brought into subjection to the will of Christ. The love of Jesus fills the soul, and is constantly going out in a clear, refreshing stream, to make glad the hearts of others (MS 33, 1911). {6BC 1076.2}

The study of God's word is continually expanding the mind and strengthening the intellect. There is nothing that will so refine and elevate the character, and give vigor to every faculty, as the continual exercise of the mind to grasp and comprehend weighty and important truths. {4T 545.3}

God never leaves the world without men who can discern between good and evil, righteousness and unrighteousness. He has men whom He has appointed to stand in the forefront of the battle in times of emergency. {GW 263.3}

No man receives holiness as a birthright, or as a gift from any other human being. Holiness is the gift of God through Christ. Those who receive the Saviour become sons of God. They are His spiritual children, born again, renewed in righteousness and true holiness. Their minds are changed. With clearer vision they behold eternal realities. They are adopted into God's family, and they become conformed to His likeness, changed by His Spirit from glory to glory. {6BC 1117.13}

The work of transformation from unholiness to holiness is a continuous one. Day by day God labors for man's sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication. Our Saviour is always ready to hear and answer the prayer of the contrite heart, and grace and peace are multiplied to His faithful ones. Gladly He grants them the blessings they need in their struggle against the evils that beset them. {AA 532.2}

Our sanctification is the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is the fulfillment of the covenant God has made with those who bind themselves up with Him, to stand with Him, His Son, and His Spirit in holy fellowship. {7BC 908.11}

To human beings, striving for conformity to the divine image, there is imparted an outlay of heaven's treasure, an excellency of power that will place them higher than even the angels who have never fallen. {HP 148.5}

In every human being He discerned infinite possibilities. He saw men as they might be, transfigured by His grace—in "the beauty of the Lord our God." Psalm 90:17. Looking upon them with hope, He inspired hope. Meeting them with confidence, He inspired trust. Revealing in Himself man's true ideal, He awakened, for its attainment, both desire and faith. In His presence souls despised and fallen realized that they still were men, and they longed to prove themselves worthy of His regard. In many a heart that seemed dead to all things holy, were awakened new impulses. To many a despairing one there opened the possibility of a new life. {Ed 80.1}

When Christ took human nature upon Him, He bound humanity to Himself by a tie of love that can never be broken by any power save the choice of man himself. Satan will constantly present allurements to induce us to break this tie—to choose to separate ourselves from Christ. Here is where we need to watch, to strive, to pray, that nothing may entice us to *choose* another master; for we are always free to do this. But let us keep our eyes fixed upon Christ, and He will preserve us. Looking unto Jesus, we are safe. Nothing can pluck us out of His hand. In constantly beholding Him, we "are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Corinthians 3:18. {SC 72.1}

The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God. {Ed 126.4}

The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing. By it the highest energies of the being are roused to activity. It frees the soul from the guilt and sorrow, the anxiety and care, that crush the life forces. With it come serenity and composure. It implants in the soul, joy that nothing earthly can destroy,—joy in the Holy Spirit,—health-giving, life-giving joy. {MH 115.3}

The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ. When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance. The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour. {COL 419.6}

Never feel that Christ is far away. He is always near. His loving presence surrounds you. Seek Him as One who desires to be found of you. He desires you not only to touch His garments, but to walk with Him in constant communion. {MH 85.2}

Those who make God their efficiency realize their own weakness, and the Lord supplies them with His wisdom. As day by day they depend upon God, carrying out His will with humility and wholeheartedness and strictest integrity, they increase in knowledge and ability. By willing obedience they show reverence and honor to God, and are honored by Him. {ML 110.4}

The Lord is at work in many ways to win your hearty confidence. In nothing does He take more delight than to have you unburden, come to Him for light and strength, and He has promised that you shall find rest to your soul. If you will find heart and voice to pray, He will be sure to hear, and an arm will be reached down to save you. There is a God that hears prayer, and when all other resources fail, He is your refuge, a very present help in time of trouble. . . . {TDG 184.4}

All who come to Christ for a clearer knowledge of the truth will receive it. He will unfold to them the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, and these mysteries will be understood by the heart that longs to know the truth. A heavenly light will shine into the soul temple, and will be revealed to others as the bright shining of a lamp on a dark path. {COL 35.3}

If you will ask help of God you need not ask in vain. In order to encourage us to have confidence and trust He comes near us by His holy Word and Spirit, and seeks in a thousand ways to win our confidence. {TDG 194.5}