

Series on The Prayers of the Apostle Paul
Galatians 1:3-5
Sermon #12
July 30, 1995

GLORY TO GOD FOR CHRIST
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Alright. I would like for you to take your Bibles and turn to Paul's Epistle to the Galatians. We are going through the Pauline Epistles and noting especially the prayers of the Apostle Paul.

When I began this series on his prayers, we started with the epistles that were written to the church at Thessalonica and we noticed a real enthusiasm on his part for what had taken place in the lives of the believers there. In fact, if you want to look at 1 Thessalonians, you can turn to the first chapter. 2 Thessalonians begins about the same way. If you do not want to turn, why you can just listen, but listen to the thanksgiving and enthusiasm that he expressed there: "We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God" (1 Thessalonians 1:2-4).

If you read through the first chapter and on through the book, you will see that his heart was really rejoicing in what God had done in Thessalonica.

In 1 Corinthians Paul expressed his thanksgiving to God for them, but it was different from his letters to the church at Thessalonica because of all the problems that they were having in Corinth. His rebuke of the church, the divisions that they had, began in chapter 1 and verse 11 and really continued throughout the first epistle.

2 Corinthians, which we concluded last week, was better, but it still did not measure up to 1 and 2 Thessalonians. There is not that idea that every time I think of you I rejoice in what God is doing and the blessing that you are experiencing, because there were still some problems that were going on in the city of Corinth.

Today I want to take up Paul's prayers in his letter to the churches of Galatia. I say, "his prayers," because he begins with a prayer and he ends with a prayer. We will not be spending a lot of time in this epistle because of the fact that there are only those two. The one that comes at the end of Galatians, you can see, is one that we have had before because this is the way Paul often concluded his epistle by simply saying, "Brethren, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen" (Galatians 6:18).

The prayer that I want to take up is the one that he mentions in Galatians 1:3-5. You will notice in this prayer that there is no word of thanksgiving. Paul did not forget to be gracious in his writing, but he used stronger language in this epistle than he did in any of his other epistles. That was because he was deeply concerned about what was going on in the churches of Galatia. I want just to briefly read some of these for you so that you can catch the spirit of the epistle. Then you will be able to appreciate the prayer even more. At least I hope that will be the result.

Chapter 1 verses 6 through nine.. Notice. He gets right into his subject.

"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed."

You do not find him saying anything like this in his letter to the Thessalonians.

Look at chapter 3: "O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?"

I take it that he means by that that the Gospel had been preached so powerfully and so vividly to the churches of Galatia that it was just like they were on the scene witnessing the crucifixion of the Lord Jesus.

"This only would I learn of you, [He calls them into account] Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh? Have ye suffered so many things in vain? If it be yet in vain. He therefore that ministereth to you the spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? (Galatians 3:1-5).

You can begin to see that the problem was that some teachers had come in and were stressing the importance of the Law, stressing the importance of circumcision, corrupting the doctrine of the grace of God. Paul was obviously very alarmed by what was going on.

Look at chapter four verses 8 through 18: "Howbeit then, when ye knew not God, ye did service unto them which by nature are no gods. But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage? Ye observe days and months, and times, and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain. Brethren, I beseech you, be as I am; for I am as ye are: ye have not injured me at all. Ye know how through infirmity of the flesh I preached the gospel unto you at the first. And my temptation [my trial, my thorn in the flesh] which was in my flesh ye despised not, nor rejected; but received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus. Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? for I bear you record, that, if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? They zealously affect you [these are the false teachers], but not well; yea, they would exclude you, that ye might affect them. But it is good to be zealously affected always in a good thing, and not only when I am present with you."

Then, chapter 5, the first fifteen verses. I am not going to read all of those verses to you, but just let me read a part of it.

Verses 2-4: "Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised [which was one of the strong points of these Judaizing teachers], Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you,

whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace."

Verses 7-9: "Ye did run well; who did hinder you that ye should not obey the truth? This persuasion cometh not of him that calleth you. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

Then, chapter 6 verses 11-:

What Paul literally says here is: "Ye see with what large letters I have written unto you with mine own hand."

This adds support to the idea that Paul's thorn in the flesh was poor eyesight. You remember that we read there in chapter four that he said, "The time was when you would have taken out your eyes and given them to me, if you could." So, instead of dictating this letter, as was Paul's custom, to someone who would take it down as his secretary, he says, "I have gone to the trouble of writing this letter myself. That is the reason it is written in such large letters." He did not have any way of correcting his eyesight, but to show them his deep concern he did something that he did not usually do. They received this epistle in large letters, and they were in large letters because Paul had written it with his own hand.

"As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh. But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Galatians 6:12-14).

I hope that you get the tone of this epistle. Paul is alarmed. Paul is amazed that after experiencing such blessing that they could turn aside and not follow the true grace of God.

When we think of a church like this, he cannot really say, "I am thankful for you and I am rejoicing in what God is doing in your midst," this raises the question, "How can we pray when we think of a church or churches like these Galatian churches?" Does this mean that prayer is eliminated, or has to be put on hold, especially a prayer of thanksgiving? because he certainly could not be thankful for what was going on there in those churches. If you look at these verses which will be our text for today, you will discover that prayer is never on hold. There is always something to be thankful for. It is never eliminated. Whenever we cannot thank God for His people and what is going on in their lives, this prayer teaches us that we can always be thankful to God for the Lord Jesus Christ, because that is the gist of his thanksgiving. This is the reason I have just taken the words that Paul uses in verse 5 and taken as my subject: "Glory to God for Christ." Praise God for Jesus Christ. The worst things may be among the Lord's people, the greater reason we have to thank God that He is the God that He is and to thank God for sending His Son into the world. This is what Paul does in this prayer, the theme of his short prayer, and the only prayer we are going to spend time on in this epistle.

Let me read this to you. Verse 3 we have had before, haven't we? It is a characteristic of Paul, but think--here is a church that has turned from grace to Law, turned from all the blessings that they had in Christ as a gift of the grace of God, and they have been taken back. Many Gentiles were put under the Law thinking that they had greater merit if they were circumcised, if they observed certain days,

if they kept the Law, this was earning them merit with God. When he said to them, "Grace be to you, and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ," it had special emphasis. What they needed in this church was a fresh measure of the grace of God, and be brought back to see that there was not anything that they could possibly do to merit the grace of God. Then he says this, speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ, "Who gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world [or, it is the Greek word for "age"], according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." (Galatians 1:3-5).

You see, when he cannot say, "I thank God upon every remembrance of you," he can say, "I am thanking God for Jesus Christ and what Jesus Christ did and that He did it according to the will of the Father, and all of the glory and all of the praise belongs to Him."

It is really a wonderful prayer, though it is very, very short.

There was no church that Paul had anything to do with, as we can see from this epistle, that was in greater need than the Galatian churches. Galatia was a Roman province. It was a region in central Asia Minor, or where Turkey is today, bounded on the east by Capadocia and on the west by the Roman province of Asia. It was the northern part of this region was settled in the third century B.C. by Celtic tribes that had been driven out of Gaul. It was from these tribes that the region derived its name: Galatia. Paul went there on his first missionary journey with Barnabas and they evangelized most of Galatia. Then he revisited these churches on his second and third missionary journeys. Some of the cities that were in this area you would recognize. Pisidia, Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, you remember, where Paul was stoned, Derby. These were places where Paul and his co-workers had seen great blessing, but things were altogether different later as he wrote this epistle.

In these cities, Jewish teachers of the Law had come in and were teaching the necessity of circumcision and, in general, obedience to the whole Law for salvation, necessary for salvation. This amounted to a violent contradiction of the doctrine of grace, salvation by the grace of God. Paul called it, as I read to you a moment ago in chapter one, another Gospel, which was really not another because nobody had ever been saved by keeping the Law. It was clear that their fellowship had been adversely affected. You can see that in some of the language that he uses. He says, for example, in chapter 5 verse 15, "But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another." It is language that you would use to describe combat between wild animals. This is what it had done to the fellowship of the people in these places.

You find that where there is very little grace, there is very little peace. The people need to be turned away from the Law, from their own efforts, to see again the sufficiency of what God had done for them in Christ. So we can be sure that Paul prayed this prayer of greeting with all of the fervor and devotion that was in his heart to God. In fact, it would only have been because of God's grace and the possibility of God's peace that he would have had any hope that conditions in the Galatian churches would be reversed and they would once again see the blessing that they had experienced before. The Judaizers were legalists. A legalist is one who believes that he has to earn the blessing of God by what he does. It amounts to salvation by works. The people of the churches in Galatia needed to have their hearts turned back to God, back to Christ, remembering what they had done for the salvation of sinners. So, he prays this prayer, "Grace be to you and peace from God the Father, and from our Lord Jesus Christ."

He is particularly thankful for the items that he mentions there in verse 4. What does he say about Christ?

You notice that the first is: He mentions what Christ did -- "Who gave himself for our sins..." If they could get rid of their sins by obeying the Law and by offering sacrifices and by being circumcised and by observing all of the days, then, as I have said to you many times before, the death of Christ was the biggest mistake that could ever have been made. But it was because that all of that was inadequate, insufficient, unable to produce salvation for a single person, that when the Lord Jesus Christ came He gave Himself for our sins. What was His purpose? There are many purposes. You cannot put the whole Gospel just in one statement, but here he mentions, "That he might deliver us from this present evil age." Why did He do it? It was "according to the will of God and our Father."

You see, when these people were turning away from the Gospel, turning away from what the Lord Jesus Christ had done, they were ignoring this amazing work that God had done in sending His son, the Lord Jesus Christ coming and giving Himself in order that people might be rescued from this present evil age.

Now let's look at these for just a moment and see if we can understand a little more about what was on the heart of Paul.

You notice that when he says, speaking of Christ, that "He gave himself for our sins," he brings the Galatians immediately to the Cross where the Lord Jesus died. They had had the Cross preached to them before, they believed the message of the Cross, but these other teachers had come. Legalists always overlook the real significance of the death of Christ. They overlook the fact and deny the fact that the death of the Lord Jesus Christ, is sufficient for the salvation of as many sinners who put their trust in Him. Legalists are falsely trying to do what Christ has already done, and which, actually, no person is ever able to do for himself or herself. He did not deserve to die. They had to get false witnesses against Him. The false witnesses could not even agree. He died as a substitute for His people. He gave Himself for our sins because He was not a sinner. He took upon Himself the full penalty of our sins. His death fully met our obligation to God. There is nothing--absolutely nothing--that needs to be added or can be added to what the Lord Jesus Christ had done. What He did, He did voluntarily. He gave Himself for our sins and He suffered as no one has ever suffered. We have his own words in John 10:18 to the effect that "No one took his life from him." Judas did not take the Lord's life from Him, although, in betraying the Lord He committed a crime for which he would be held chargeable in the courts of heaven. Pilate did not take his life from him, although, you remember, Pilate, rather irritated because the Lord was not speaking up in his own defense, said to the Lord, "Don't you know that I have authority over you to deliver you up to be crucified or to set you free?" Then the Lord did speak and said, "You have no power over me at all, except it were given you from above." So Pilate did not take the life of the Lord, although he delivered the Lord over to be crucified. The Jews did not take His life from Him, although they too were fully accountable to God. The Roman soldiers who actually crucified Him did not take His life from Him. He gave Himself for our sins. He was in complete control of all the circumstances which led to His death and He was the One Who laid down His own life. Let's remember that. The Lord was not a helpless victim. The Lord was a sovereign Lord in total control of everything that was taking place. He voluntarily, willingly, laid down His life in order to deliver us from our sins.

This wonderful truth is mentioned earlier in John 10 where the Lord said in those familiar words, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth (voluntarily giveth) his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

I love to think of what Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 3:14 and apply it to the Gospel. You remember these words: "I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him." That is the Gospel, isn't it? Whatever God does, He does it perfectly. He does it for ever. You cannot take anything away from it. You cannot add anything to it. He does what He does so that we might do what Paul did here in verse 5 when he said, "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." The Lord left nothing--absolutely nothing--undone that needed to be done to put away our sins. It is not grace plus Law. In fact, Paul makes it very clear in Galatians that if you add anything to Christ, then Christ does not profit you anything.

The words of Hebrews 10:12, our Lord "offered one sacrifice for sins for ever."

In Hebrews 9 we read these words: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands..." That is, He did not do like Aaron and all the other priests of the Old Testament did. "...which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: [Now listen...] but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time [not to die again, but...] without sin unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:24-26, 28).

So the Lord Jesus, when He offered Himself, voluntarily gave Himself, He did a perfect work which never will need to be repeated. Though the world should go on for another thousand or two thousand years, or however long it goes on, the death of Christ is sufficient for all who will ever put their trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. It is not Christ plus something, but it is Christ and Christ alone.

Somebody has written a commentary on the Book of Galatians called By Grace Through Faith Plus Nothing. That is what salvation is.

Now. "He gave himself for our sins." He took upon Himself the penalty for our sins. He paid our debt in full. It is really just sounds too good to be true. I read a devotional statement from Spurgeon yesterday to the men in our morning prayer meeting. I have to confess that when Mr. Spurgeon explained the Gospel and how thoroughly God has taken care of our sins through the Lord Jesus Christ, it is just almost too good to be true. It is unbelievable. You just feel in your flesh that you need to do something, but you only feel that way if you lose sight of the sufficiency of the Lord Jesus Christ. He gave Himself for our sins. There is not anything for you and for me to do to seek the forgiveness of our sins. We come depending upon what Christ did for us.

Here he says also "that He might deliver us from this present evil age." The word "age," which is translated "world" many times in the New Testament, looks at the world from the standpoint of time. So when Paul speaks of this present evil age, he is giving this world a description which applies

regardless of what generation you might be in or regardless of what language you might speak or what nation you may have been brought up in. This world is described as present and evil. It will never be anything but evil. When it says "that He might deliver us," the world "deliver" means "rescue." The Lord Jesus, when He came, was on a rescue mission. We all know what a rescue mission is. One of the verses I read to you a moment ago, you remember, and if you do not know any other verse from Galatians, you probably know this one, Galatians 6:14, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world."

One statement about the Cross, as I have said, with reference to what Christ accomplished, can never say it all. Volumes have been written, and undoubtedly more will be written about the Cross of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Lord was accomplishing many things when He died for us on the Cross. We have already seen how He rescued us from the penalty of our sins. He rescued us from what Jerry Bridges calls in his new book, "The dominion of our sins, the power of our sins, the authority of our sins, the tyranny of our sins."

The Lord has also rescued us from this present evil age. The world is not any worse today than it always has been. We are just seeing more evidence of how evil it is. Paul stated what the Lord had done by his death when he wrote to the Colossian church. That was a church that he could be more thankful for. He said this, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us (rescued us) from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Colossians 1;12-13).

We had in our Sunday School lesson that if you are going to see the kingdom of God, you need to be born again. We are in this world, but we are no longer of this world. We used to be of it, but we are no longer of it because of what Christ has done.

Everything about this world in which we live is evil. It is evil. Paul was not talking about the earth, this planet upon which we live. He was speaking about the character of life on this earth. Every day in our newspapers, every day on newscasts, and just going around the city and listening to people's conversations, you see that we are surrounded on every hand by corruption and evil that will draw us away from God. That is the reason that you and I need to be so careful about our lives.

The world's wisdom is corrupt. You know, the farther our country gets away from the Word of God and the longer we despise the righteousness of God and the standards that the Lord has set for right and wrong, the worse it is going to appear. We are going to see it get worse and worse. The pleasures of the world are corrupt. The affect of the world upon the lives of people is harmful. You see our young men and young women going into professional sports and just have people at their feet and all of the money that they could ever want, yet the story after story after story is just full of tragedy and heartache. You see that the world is exactly as it is described by the Word of God. It is degenerate. It is lewd. It is bad. If you set your heart on the world, you are going to find just how bad the world can possibly be.

The devil is the god of this world and he earnestly seeks the eternal damnation of every person who is born into this world. We live in an atmosphere in which we are just surrounded by everything that is evil.

Martin Luther said this about the world: "There is nothing in it (speaking about the life of the world) but ignorance, contempt, blasphemy, hatred of God, and disobedience against all the words and works of God."

If you set your hope on the world, you are going to be corrupted by it and defiled by it. It seems like people are getting more blasphemous every day. This last week I was driving down the street following a car which had a bumper sticker on it which said, "Goddess bless." I drove up alongside the car and a young girl driving the car could not have been more than nineteen or twenty years of age, and here she is buying into all of this blasphemous stuff that is going on in the world where there is an attempt to make God feminine--Goddess bless, instead of God bless."

Our blessed Lord by His death has rescued us from the world. The bondage we were under has been broken. We are no longer slaves of sin. As I have said, we are still in the world and the Lord has left us here to be a testimony in the world, but we are not of it. It was and still is the prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ that we would be kept from the evil in the world and especially from the evil one. Today, when people's lives are being ruined forever, it is amazing, isn't it, that God has rescued us and has given us the message of rescue to carry to the people of the world. We have the privilege of telling people in this present evil age of the One Who has rescued us and Who will rescue them, if they will only turn to Him for the forgiveness of their sins and eternal life. The Lord saw our plight. Can we minimize it, if God would send His only begotten Son into the World to suffer and die for our sins in order that He might rescue us out of the evil, from the contamination and all of the blasphemy of this present evil world?

Why did He do it? Why did He do it?

Again, there are many statements that are made in Scripture. It was because of His love for us, for example, but here in Galatians 1 Paul says that it was "according to the will of God and our Father: To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

Was it because we asked Him to do it or we wanted Him to do it? There is no evidence of that in any person's life.

Was it because we deserved such a rescue? We certainly ought to have the answer to that more than anyone else. Absolutely not. There is not anything about the work of Christ that we deserve.

Was it because God saw something good in us worthy of saving? The Bible says, "There is none righteous, no, not one." "There is none that doeth good, no, not one." "There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." (Romans 3:10, 12, 11). There is no one good enough for God. What our Lord Jesus Christ did was according to the will of God and our Father," or, it could be translated, "according to the will of God, even our Father." Isn't it wonderful that this morning, because of what Jesus Christ did in putting away our sins and rescuing us from this present evil age, we have the privilege of addressing God as our Father? The basic reason for the Cross, the basic reason for the death of Christ is not to be found in us, but it is to be found in God. Jesus Christ was meeting a need in us, but He came according to the will of God and our Father.

You see, it was God's will. It was God's love. It was God's grace. It was God's mercy. It was God's

infinite wisdom. Our salvation originated with God before time was. He had every right to forget us and let us be ruined by this world like so many are being ruined. But, instead, He set His love upon us even though it meant the sacrifice, the terrible death of His own and only beloved son.

Paul said it this way, "For when we were yet without strength..." That is, we could not do anything about our condition. "...in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." That is, if you see a righteous person, or a person who is good, why you would perhaps be willing to do what you can to meet their need, but the amazing thing about what Jesus Christ has done and what God has done is this, "But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners..." Not righteous, not God, but sinners... "Christ died for us." Romans 5:6b-8.

Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan! (as we often sing)
Oh, the grace that brought it down to man!
Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span
At Calvary!

After reading all of this, if there is any grace at all in your heart, I am sure that you feel like Paul did when he was writing. Let me conclude with his doxology: "To whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen."

A church might turn away from the Lord, turn away from the Gospel. We cannot really be thankful at that time for what is going on in their lives, but there is never a time in any of our lives when we cannot give thanks to God for Jesus Christ and for what God has done for us in the Lord Jesus Christ. No amount of service can repay Him. If I spend my life teaching the Word and ministering the truth, that is not even a drop in the bucket compared with what I owe the Lord. We do not have enough money to properly express our gratitude. In fact, all the wealth of this world in which we live would not even make a down payment on such a salvation as we have in Christ. But there is one thing that we can do, and this is the one thing that God wants us to do. There are many things that He wants us to do, but one thing in particular. Even when things are as bad as they were in Galatia, the one thing that we all can do and need to do is to give our heavenly Father glory, glory, glory for the gift of His Son, our Redeemer and our Lord. We can always praise God for the Lord Jesus Christ.

Do you notice how he states this? "To whom be glory for ever and ever." Do you know what for ever means? It means today. It means tomorrow. It means Tuesday, on through the week, on through your life. There never should be a day in our lives but what we thank God particularly for our Lord Jesus Christ. We owe everything to Him. We deserve none of it.

So I ask you this morning, and the response is just to be in your own heart, How long has it been since you went to the Father and gave Him glory for what He has done for you in Jesus Christ? How long has it been since you said, Thank You, Father, for the Lord Jesus Christ?

What a prayer this is. Under the influence of the Jewish teachers of the Law, the Galatian churches had lost sight of the sufficiency of Christ. They had lost sight of the sufficiency of Christ not only for their salvation, but for their daily living and for all eternity. I trust that the Lord will never let

us be guilty of such ingratitude. Every day we live, even when we are overwhelmed with our trials and problems and testings of various kinds, it is always going to be good to our souls and for our spirits to go to the Father, if all that we can say is "Thank You, Father, for Jesus Christ."

If you happen to be a person this morning who is still without Christ, may it please the Lord to open your eyes to see that He is the One and the only One you need for the salvation of your soul. He is the One Who by His death on the Cross did everything necessary to give you perfect acceptance with God. Your good intentions, your good works, your attendance here this morning, whatever you might give to the Lord, has nothing to do with your salvation. Your salvation is offered on the basis of grace, which means you do not deserve it. It is given to you because it is provided by God and once salvation is yours, once Christ becomes your Saviour, it can never be taken away. May you seek the Lord, if you are without Him, while He may be found, and call upon Him while He is near. As Isaiah said, "Forsake the way that leads to eternal destruction and turn to the One and the only One Who can give you life." His promise is that He will never turn away any who seek Him for His grace and for His salvation.

Shall we pray.

Father, how wonderful is the Gospel message, and how wonderful is the work that the Lord Jesus Christ did voluntarily, though the price was far greater than we can ever understand, at least this side of heaven. How thankful we are that He has done everything necessary for the forgiveness of our sins, to deliver us from this present evil world, and to know, Father, that He has done this because this was Your purpose for us, Your will. So we say, Father, to You we give all the glory and all the praise today and tomorrow and throughout the rest of our lives and all through eternity we know that we are going to be praising You for what You have done for us in Christ. In His precious Name, we pray, Amen.