

Sabbath School Lesson #2 – Reasons for Thanksgiving and Prayer – 3-9 Jan 2026

Christ would have us hold fast the beginning of faith. Paul says, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6). We must hold fast the beginning in Christ. To the Galatians, asked the apostle Paul, “Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?” (Galatians 3:3). Foolish is but a feeble term for it. The man who has not power to begin a work, has strength to finish it! Impossible. Who has power to beget himself? No one; we come into this world without having begotten ourselves; we are born without strength; and therefore all the strength that ever manifests itself in us, comes from another than ourselves. It is all given to us. The new-born babe is the representative of man. “A man is born into the world.” All the strength that any man has of himself is found in the infant as it utters its first cry with its first breath. Even so in things spiritual. “Of His own will begat He us with the Word of truth” (James 1:18). We can no more live righteous lives by our own strength than we could beget ourselves. The work that is begun by the Spirit, must be carried to completion by the Spirit. “We are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end” (Hebrews 3:14). “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.” And He alone can do it.

Sunday: Fellowship in the Gospel – Read Philippians 1:3-8; what is Paul thankful for? What reassurances does he give the Philippians, and why is that important? The words we read here (Philippians 1:3-6), among all the encouraging things in the Bible, there is none more encouraging than this. For the confidence expressed by the apostle is confidence inspired by the Spirit; and it applies to us as well as to the saints at Philippi, to whom the epistle was immediately addressed. Let us note some of the precious lessons from it.

We learn that there is no work that is good except that which is done by the Lord. “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). Every good thing that God has He gives to men. “No good thing will He withhold from them that walk uprightly” (Psalm 84:11). Some think that God is especially good to certain people; but the fact is that He is just as good He can be all the time, equally good to everybody. “He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust” (Matthew 5:45). “The Lord is good to all; and His tender mercies are over all His works” (Psalm 145:9).

But the apostle here refers especially to good that is done in men, and which appears in their lives; to those things which make people refer to one as “a good man.” Since “there is none good but one, that is, God” (Mark 10:18), it follows that there is no good deed done except that which is done by the Lord. To this the whole of Scripture gives witness. “Oh how great is Thy goodness, which Thou hast laid up for them that fear Thee; which Thou hast wrought for them that trust in Thee before the sons of men!” (Psalm 31:19). “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (John 3:21). “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Philippians 2:3). “For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous” (Romans 5:19). If people would always remember the scriptures, they would be an effectual bar to pride and self-conceit.

“This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom He hath sent” (John 6:29). In Christ all things are in created, that are in heaven and in earth, whether things that can be seen, or things unseen (Colossians 1:16). He is “the beginning of the creation of God” (Revelation 3:14). Creation began in Him, in Him is complete. The power that created the worlds, is the same power that works righteousness in men. As “the heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shewth His handiwork” (Psalm 19:1), so also “we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10). So as all creation stands perfect in Him, those who believe in Him to save their souls are “complete in Him” (Colossians 2:10).

Monday: Paul’s Prayer Requests – Read Paul’s prayer in Philippians 1:9-11; what is its focus, and what big requests does he make? What does it tell you about prayer? Paul prays for the saints to be “filled with the fruits of righteousness”. The fruits of righteousness are

righteous fruits. These fruits are by Jesus Christ, as He says: "I am the true vine, and My Father is the husbandman. Every branch in Me that beareth not fruit He taketh away; and every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit.... Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in Me. I am the vine, ye are the branches; He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without [apart from] Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:1-5). The fruit borne by the branch that abides in Christ, is deeds of righteousness. If we abide in Christ, we bring forth much fruit, if we are separate from Him, we can do nothing. Doing nothing is made equivalent to not bearing fruit. So then bearing fruit in the vine is identical with doing something. There is nothing more passive than the bearing of fruit; and yet there is nothing in which more intense activity is shown than in a fruitful vine or tree. The tree can do nothing to make itself bear fruit, yet the bearing of fruit is a period of activity.

Tuesday: Spiritual Discernment Applied – Read Philippians 1:12-18; how did Paul view his imprisonment? What can we learn from his attitude, despite the circumstances he found himself in? Paul understood the truth and lived for Christ and died for Christ. Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21). Paul wrote the epistle from his prison cell in Rome, yet we find in the whole epistle not one syllable of complaint. Instead, he says, "I have learned; in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content;" "I have all, and abound" (Philippians 4:11, 18). He speaks of the work of the Lord. "But I would ye should understand that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the Gospel" (verse 12). The result had been that the Gospel of Christ had been made known not only in the court of Cæsar, but in all other places. The courage of the brethren in Rome had been quickened, and they had begun to preach Christ. It is true that all did not preach from love, but the fact remained that Christ was preached, and he said, "Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (verses 18). There is not the slightest trace of self cropping out there. Now read carefully the next three verses. It is clear in saying "to die is gain" Paul was not thinking of any gain to himself, but only of the gain to Christ. His only desire was that Christ should be magnified, whether it was by his life or by his death. For he knew that whenever he should die, it would be the death of a martyr, and that therefore the cause of Christ would be glorified thereby. May we also glorify Christ.

Wednesday: Gospel Fruit – In Colossians 1:5, Paul writes about "the hope which is laid up for you in heaven." What is your understanding of that hope, and why does it apply to you personally, even though you are truly unworthy? If you had the gospel and accepted it and continue in that faith, trusting not in yourself, but in Christ. Paul wrote to the Colossians, "We give thanks to God.... for the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof 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." And again, he said that they would be presented holy before the Lord, "if ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the Gospel, which ye have heard, and which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister" (verse 23).

Thursday: Prayer Power – Read Colossians 1:9-12; what specific requests do you find in Paul's prayer? Notice, in his second epistle Peter says: "Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, according as His divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue" (2 Peter 1:2-3). Here is comfort, indeed, life in Christ! All things that pertain unto life and godliness are given to us by this divine power of Christ. Surely there is no manner of excuse for anybody's failing of righteousness and eternal life. The "glorious power" of God is shown in the heavens, which "declare the glory of God" (Psalms 19:1), and in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. This glorious power may be ours, we may be "strengthened with all might," to be able to "walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing." This power Christ can bestow on us, because He has experienced the very lowest ebb of human weakness, so that He knows just what help is needed. By "all power," "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" (Hebrews 7:25). It is a soul-cheering thought that human weakness is not a bar to victory but the very stepping-stone to victory (see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10; Hebrews 11:34).